

"You promised me the ending would be clear/You'd let me know when the time was now/Don't let me know when you're opening the door/Stab me in the dark, let me disappear"

DAVID BOWIE MEMORIAL SPECIAL UNCUT



DAVID BOWIE
1947-2016

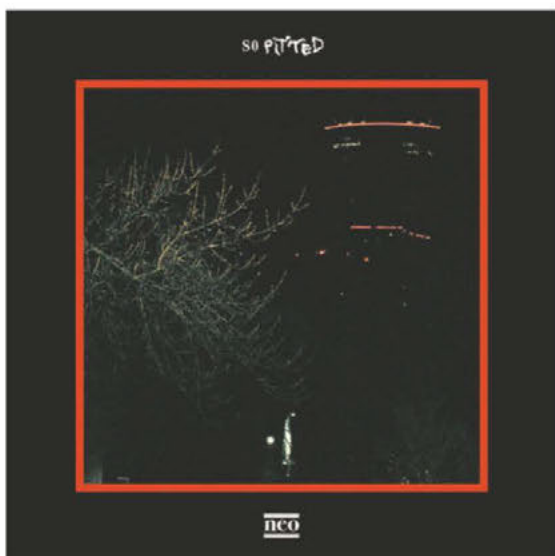
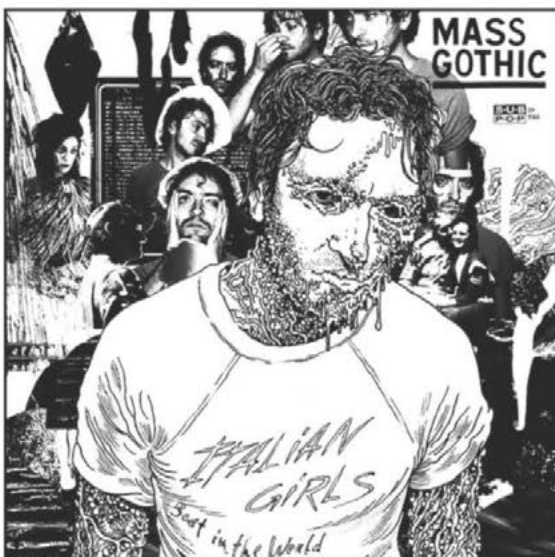
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#1 in QUANTITY

SUB
POP



SHEARWATER

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MASS GOTHIC

Mass Gothic CD/LP/CASS/DG
(February 5th)

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Heron Oblivion CD/LP/CASS/DG
(March 4)

CULLEN OMORI

New Misery CD/LP/CASS/DG
(March 18)



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John Mulvey

John Mulvey, Editor. Follow me on Twitter @JohnRMulvey

FEBRUARY 26, 1976. At the Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto, the 17th night of the Isolar tour is coming to its traditional close. As the stark, expressionist spectacle reaches its climax, David Bowie fires an imaginary arrow into the air. On cue, his lighting director plunges the stage into darkness. Cut to black. Thirty feet from the stage, the photographer John Rowlands takes the picture which adorns our cover this month, and which Bowie reputedly counted as one of his favourite images of himself. In the midst of the grief and chaos which has engulfed the music world these past few days, it occurred to us that Rowlands' shot would be a fitting one to use on the front of this special issue of *Uncut*.

I can think of few words I like less than "iconic", and the way it's casually bandied about in journalism, often to the point of meaninglessness. Nevertheless, it seems apposite here. No rock star has understood the iconic possibilities of his art more than Bowie; has grasped the mythic potential of what he does. "He believed in costume, and theatre, choreography, set design, lyrics, the right producer, the right engineer," says bassist Herbie Flowers, one of the many Bowie associates who were so generous with their time and tributes. "He could do everything."

Time and again in these interviews, there is testimony to the range and complexity of Bowie's genius and character. A master of bold gestures and otherworldly glamour on one hand, a deeply humane friend on the other. We hear of a touching gift for producer Ken Scott; a brilliant practical joke at the expense of Brian Eno; a memorable last encounter with one of *Blackstar*'s gifted lieutenants, Donny McCaslin. Bowie contained multitudes, and David Cavanagh has done a remarkable job of reflecting on that in the memorial piece which begins on page 24. "Assessments of Bowie's legacy came from every corner of the culture, every place where a culture prevailed," Cavanagh writes, "and when you added up his significance to all of them, he seemed to have had a number of simultaneous lifetimes... In each encomium his fearlessness was a common theme. His uncanny ability to see into the future – and then promptly shape it – was another."

Checking through the rest of this issue of *Uncut*, it's striking how much Bowie permeates our own culture. In pieces filed long before his death, artists as diverse as The Pop Group and Clint Mansell note his influence. The memoirs of his landlady, with whom he lodged for nine months in 1969, turn up on our Books page. And among other sad deaths logged in our Not Fade Away section, there is an obituary for Brett Smiley, one of those fated glam starlets whose careers were launched in the wake of Bowiemania. We can't escape Bowie this month – and, thankfully, we never will.

He's told us not to blow it, after all...

COVER: JOHN ROWLANDS/ZUMAPRESS.COM/CORBIS THIS PAGE: JIMMY KING

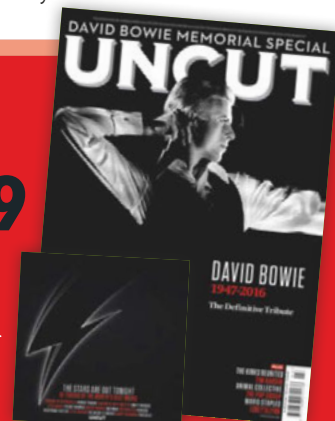
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INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF **UNCUT**
GRANT-LEE PHILLIPS | CAVERN OF ANTI-MATTER | FLOATING POINTS



A FAMILY XMAS

FACE TO FACE!

Ray and Dave Davies – together again for the first time in two decades

“I FELT IT WAS like in the beginning,” says Dave Davies, as he recalls the emotions he experienced the night his brother Ray sang with him for the first time in 19 years. “Two kids getting together and playing music, that’s what it felt like. Those old feelings, the reason why we did all this bloody bullshit in the first place. All the torture we put each other through. It was really worth it just to resurrect those feelings again. It really made it special.”

Two years ago, Ray and Dave were telling *Uncut* of tentative plans for a Kinks reunion to mark the band’s 50th anniversary in 2014. In the months that followed, contemporaries like The Rolling

Stones and The Who marked their half-centuries with high-profile, lucrative gigs at Hyde Park and elsewhere. But such orderly behaviour was never The Kinks’ style. Instead, at the end of Dave Davies’ gig at Islington Assembly Hall on December 18, a few hundred fans saw Ray stroll casually onstage and sing “You Really Got Me”.

This Christmas miracle started with an email. “I figured Ray might come to the gig, because it’s not far from where he lives anyway,” Dave explains to *Uncut*. “I had said the week before, ‘I’ll put your name on the door, just come back and say hello.’ And he didn’t say yes or no. And then I figured, ‘Oh, what the hell,’ and emailed him at the soundcheck and said, ‘If you’re coming

by, just get up onstage at the end and you can sing “You Really Got Me”.’ My first thought was to run through “Days” and “Waterloo Sunset” with the band as well, for Ray to sing if he wanted, except I got ill that week with a debilitating flu bug. When we rehearsed the day before, I could hardly stand up, so we left the extra songs.”

Dave’s guitarist Jonathan Lea, who happened to be in the wings, was the first to catch sight of Ray. At the end of the gig, he told Dave the news. “I said to the audience, ‘I think we might have a little surprise for you,’” Dave recalls. “But then I looked round, and I couldn’t see him. I thought, ‘Oh, he’s pissing me about.’ Even in those seconds, I thought, ‘Oh, shit. He won’t bother.’



Then I saw a silhouette waiting in the wings. And he came on, and I think it made a lot of people jump out of their skins."

Ray, holding a water bottle, looked offhand at first, but was soon caught up in the excitement, as the years since they'd played melted away. "It's like meeting someone you're close to in the pub, and picking up a conversation you left off the year before," Dave explains. "Your body's so into the moment of the music you lock straight back into it again. I could tell Ray was vibing that, as well. I miss playing with Ray. Those good feelings, and the telepathy when you look at each other for a split-second, which you can't contrive. I thought he was singing great and moving good. I had a big

*"I miss playing with
Ray. Those good feelings,
and the telepathy when
you look at each other"*

DAVE DAVIES

smile on my face. I was really moved. It seemed so natural. It wasn't a big trauma. It was easy."

Inevitably, thoughts are turning to the future. Has enough changed between the brothers that

they might play again? "Well, I like to think so," Dave considers. "Ray was very respectful. Afterwards I found out people were saying to him, 'Oh, you should go on earlier.' He said, 'No, I want to respect Dave's wishes.' I thought that was very kind of him. Because he could have fucked my gig up, if he'd wanted to. We haven't talked seriously about doing anything for a year. But maybe he's getting more mellow and thoughtful, and thinking we're not going to be around forever. Maybe we'll work something out. I'm sure we'll have a chat after the holidays. Anyway, it was a great way to end 2015. Pity the Arsenal lost last night. But I think that'll go OK, too..."

NICK HASTED

STEREOLAB'S LOSS, MUSIC'S GANE

Welcome back **TIM GANE**, and his new “electronic garage band”, **CAVERN OF ANTI-MATTER**

“**M**Y STUDIO IS very state of the art,” laughs Tim Gane, from his Bloody Hair space in Berlin. “For 1982, that is. I like seeing a studio that has loads of old electronic boxes, all piled together with loads of cables. Not one that’s Finnish wood and all nice...”

Whether leading Stereolab or his current group Cavern Of Anti-Matter, or collaborating with Mouse On Mars and Nurse With Wound, Tim Gane has always been more interested in the possibilities of the studio over songwriting. Cavern’s upcoming *Void Beats/Invocation Trex* – their second LP but first to be widely released – was inspired by linking up a set of analogue Roland drum machines and Roland, ARP and Korg synths and hoping that the resulting daisy chain would “show [Gane] something different”.

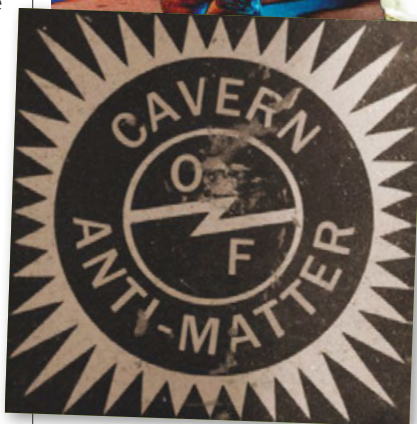
Live drums, guitars and synths from Gane and fellow Cavern members Joe Dilworth (Stereolab’s first drummer) and Holger Zapf were also added and treated with analogue effects, resulting in a sprawling, primitivist mix of motorik pulses, industrial shading and ethereal synth tones.

“Though Stereolab were known as an electronic band, we didn’t use electronics that much,” explains Gane. “I wanted *Void Beats* to sound like, in the words of Cabaret Voltaire, an electronic garage band. I’m trying to keep the computer to a minimum – no plug-ins or soft synths – and just trying to capture all the machines linking up.”

One of the most impressive examples of this “electronic garage” sound on *Void Beats* is the 13-minute opener, “tardis cymbals”, as forward-moving and hypnotic as Faust’s “Krautrock” yet rooted in the off-kilter 7/8 time signature. This stemmed from Gane’s extensive experiments with



The Cavern club: Tim Gane, Joe Dilworth and Holger Zapf; below, the sleeve of *Void Beats/Invocation Trex*



drum machines, as encouraged by Peter Strickland, the British director of the acclaimed films *Berberian Sound Studio* and *The Duke Of Burgundy*.

“We spoke about working on a film together,” explains Strickland, “and about drum machines. I wanted this very electronic

soundtrack. Back in the ‘90s Stereolab’s music actually made me rethink film, the way you can use repetition as a building block, in terms of accumulation and modulation. And all these weird juxtapositions, they were always throwing these odd black holes into the middle of their stuff. It was a very different way of doing things, fresh and inspiring.”

After Stereolab went on indefinite hiatus in 2009, Gane, a Berlin resident since 2005, has supplemented his highly limited Cavern Of Anti-Matter releases with an array of soundtrack work. This time around, though, the latter even fed into his own music, with an early version of *Void Beats*’ sprightly “Liquid Gate”, with vocals by Deerhunter’s Bradford Cox, appearing in a house party scene in French film *La Ritournelle* in 2014.

Aside from the early ‘80s technology in Gane’s studio, another inspiration on Cavern’s recent work has been the

concept of “invocation”, as evident in the LP’s title. Gane likens this mood to the eerie feel of early Cabaret Voltaire or 23 Skidoo: “It’s a rough concept but one that I had in the back of my mind. I wanted a ritualistic sound, a summoning-up of something. It’s not exactly dark or industrial, but there’s a certain ritualistic feel.”

Though Cavern Of Anti-Matter are hoping to play in the UK for the first time this spring, Gane – who puts Stereolab’s hiatus partly down to his dislike of extensive touring – is characteristically more interested in his next musical discovery in the studio. “When you’re recording, you change yourself, you discover things and you discover yourself,” he says.

“That’s quite true of this record and the previous one [2013’s *Blood-Drums*]. I want to discover what’s possible through making them.”

TOM PINNOCK

“I wanted to create a ritualistic sound on our album, a summoning-up of something”



Deerhunter’s Bradford Cox guests on the LP

Void Beats/Invocation Trex is out on Duophonic on February 19



Take a bough:
Johnny Marr and
Morrissey, 1983

I STARTED SOMETHING

Keeping up with The Smiths

Dale Hibbert recounts early days with Morrissey and Marr: "They were just another small band..."

IN A BEDROOM in Manchester, Johnny Marr, Steven Morrissey and Dale Hibbert are discussing the image of their new band while in the background, a tape plays Morrissey and Marr covering "I Want A Boy For My Birthday" – a Cookies B-side from 1963. Various ideas are tossed around – being a "gay band", naming each member after a mass murderer, dressing in American ten-pin bowling shirts – as the trio, tentatively named The Smiths, contemplate the best way to get noticed in the 1980s. "It can be strange thinking that's how it started – me, Steven and Johnny in Johnny's bedroom," says Hibbert, the band's first bassist. "We had four drummers before we chose Mike and for a long time it was just me, Steve and Johnny."

Hibbert played The Smiths' debut gig in October 1982 and recorded their first studio demos before he was replaced by Andy Rourke towards the end of 1982. Hibbert, who now runs a café outside Manchester, has written a memoir, *Boy, Interrupted*. "I've given interviews for a lot of Smiths books but this was a chance to have control over how I saw events," he says. "It felt like a good time to do it."

While Hibbert recalls his six months in The Smiths in great detail – "it sort of cauterises the memories once you've recounted the stories so many times" –

he also writes engagingly about Manchester, his troubled upbringing and a life plagued by depression. "It's a music book but it's also about people who have tried to kill themselves," says Hibbert, who hopes it might help people understand the problem of depression.

Understandably, though, a fair portion of the book is about The Smiths. Hibbert was invited to join the band by Marr and was party to their earliest moves. He drafts engaging portraits of Morrissey

"I never listened to the lyrics – that's the singer's job – so I didn't see anything special there"

and Marr and the Manchester post-punk scene, offering a unique perspective on the band as they took their first steps. At the time, Hibbert admits, he had little notion of Marr and Morrissey's talent. "They were just another small band from Manchester," he says. "I never listened to the lyrics – that's the singer's job – so I didn't see anything special there. The

music was OK but I was working in a studio recording bands every day. They all came in with passion and belief like Steven and Johnny, and then you'd never hear from them again, so I was a bit immune to it."

The only inkling he got of the success that would follow was at the band's debut gig, where The Smiths supported Blue Rondo A La Turk at the Ritz in October 1982. "That was so unusual, a band that had been together a few months with four songs supporting a band that had just been on *Top Of The Pops*," he says. "That made me wonder if there was something different about them. I don't understand how they got such a big gig. When you've been in bands, pestering for support gigs, you know how hard it is to secure that sort of gig. But otherwise, there were an awful lot of bands around that were similar."

Although Hibbert would give Morrissey a lift to rehearsals on the back of his motorbike, Hibbert was eventually replaced by Marr's old bandmate, Rourke. "We didn't gel, but I never understood why I was kicked out," he says. "It might have been 'cos I was spending so long at the studio, but we didn't get on and it was odd as we had many similar interests. It could be that I'm not easily dominated and it was always clear that The Smiths would be Morrissey and Marr, and they wanted people who could accept that."

There's little bitterness in Hibbert's memoir, but he does challenge the notion he was sacked due to poor musicianship. "I sometimes feel I've had a hard time," he admits. "I've never tried to live a life as an ex-Smith. The fans say I'm an irrelevance, which is possibly true. I'm not claiming I did anything, I'm just saying I was there and this is what it was like." **PETER WATTS**

Dale Hibbert's *Boy, Interrupted: Memoir Of A Former Smith* is out now



A QUICK ONE

► The Uncut family continues to grow. In shops now, you'll find our latest *Ultimate Music Guide* on The Byrds, as well as a new instalment of *History Of Rock*, which covers 1971. You can also buy them online at www.uncut.co.uk/store.



► After telling us about their reunion EP, "Happy New Year", in *Uncut* last year, the Violent Femmes return with their first new studio album in 15 years. *We Can Do Anything* is out on March 4.

► Jack White digs into his archives again, this time to bring us cuts from his early bands, Two Star Tabernacle, The Go and Jack White And The Bricks. They're collected on three albums available via Third Man Records' Vault subscription service. More details here: <http://thirdmanstore.com/vault>.

► CBGB is to reopen... as a restaurant! The legendary East Village venue closed in 2006, but the name has been revived for a diner at Newark Airport. The menu ranges from 'disco fries' (\$9) to prime rib (\$42). From rock to rolls, then.

► Members of the original cast of *Quadrophenia* are to reunite at an interactive event at Hammersmith's Eventim Apollo on February 11. Expect Phil Daniels, director Franc Roddam and many more ace faces to talk 'bout their generation.

► Visit www.uncut.co.uk for daily news, reviews, playlists and the best longreads from the archive.

TRAIL OF TEARS

Buffalo stance

GRANT-LEE PHILLIPS on identity, loss and indigenous faith

THE AMERICAN SOUTH has exerted a lifelong fascination for Grant-Lee Phillips. "Some of it's a family thing," he explains. "My dad was from Arkansas, my mom's from Oklahoma and a lot of the music I grew up with had been connected to the South. I love that melding of blues, country, folk and bluegrass. It always felt like it was free to pull from, that you could constantly extract new ideas from that weird old America."

The 52-year-old, who first came to prominence with '90s roots heroes Grant Lee Buffalo, has now pressed this psychogeography into *The Narrows*, perhaps his most personal solo album to date. It's also his first release since opting to leave his native California for a new life in Nashville in 2013, thereby adding a more physical Southern connection: "Packing our bags for Tennessee came alongside the realisation that maybe it was the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. My wife and I [visual artist/photographer Denise

Siegel] were looking for a little more normalcy, something I could relate to. There are a lot of things that reach out to you in Nashville. In terms of music, things tend to be a lot deeper here."

Recorded in Dan Auerbach's local Easy Eye Studio, with Phillips joined by bassist Lex Price and drummer Jerry Roe, son of Johnny Cash's former bass player Dave Roe,

"Being of mixed blood, it's hard to embrace a lot of the spiritual beliefs in the US"

The Narrows is primarily about identity and loss. It touches on a number of emotive themes, not least the death of Phillips' father (who passed away not long after the move to Nashville) and his own

Creek and Cherokee heritage. The poignantly beautiful "Cry Cry", for instance, addresses one of the most shameful episodes in US history: the Indian Removal of the 19th century. "That particular subject matter is such a hard thing to wrap your arms around, but it's something I'll continue to try to unravel," he says, referring to the government's policy of driving entire populations of Native Americans from their ancestral Southland into federal territory to the West. Thousands died en route, in what has since become known as The Trail Of Tears.

Phillips adds that, as a descendant of those who experienced the removal, familial history has shaped his own sense of self. "I spent a good deal of time with my grandma when I was growing up," he recalls. "She was very in touch with her ancestry and would take me for long trips to

Montana and Utah and all these places, passing on stories. It isn't long before a child begins to get a sense of American history and realise that we haven't always been on the winning end of that contract. Being from mixed blood means that it has a spin on how I view things. When it comes down to faith, it's very hard for me to entirely embrace a lot of the traditions and spiritual beliefs in the States. Indigenous ideas make much more sense to me. They just ring truer."

ROB HUGHES

The Narrows is released in March on Yep Roc Records. **Grant-Lee Phillips** tours the UK in April



THE CLASSIFIEDS

THIS MONTH: Elton John plays at home! The 'exclusive Central London appearance' of David Bowie, plus Roxy Music on the rise - MM, Feb 12, 1972

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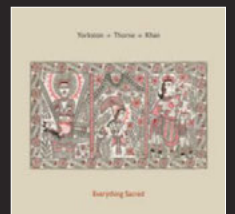
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ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

I'M NEW HERE

FLOATING POINTS

Recommended this month: Sam Shepherd – DJ, ex-chorister, doctor of neuroscience and cosmic jazz-psych adventurer

THE YEAR 2015's most acclaimed records were those that gently drew listeners into their own stubborn yet richly rewarding soundworlds: Julia Holter's *Have You In My Wilderness*, Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp A Butterfly*, Kasami Washington's *The Epic*. And right up there with them was Floating Points' *Elaenia* – a billowing journey through cosmic electronica and jazzy psychedelic soul, led by Sam Shepherd, a renowned DJ and former Manchester Cathedral chorister with a PhD in neuroscience. Shepherd's been releasing music on his own Eglo label since 2009, but was in no hurry to make an album. "At the time I wasn't writing anything that had that ambition," he explains, "largely as I didn't have the time. I felt [the PhD] was a priority." He talks about his research into neuro-epigenetics – "the molecular basis for pain" – with the same passion he talks about music, so it's easy to see why he was waylaid. But with his thesis completed in May 2014, he was at last ready to make the leap from one-off club 12" to big LP statement.

And *Elaenia* is quite a statement. Shepherd concedes that the idea of a 'dance producer' making a largely beat-less, jazz-influenced album named after a South American bird he saw in a dream could be construed as pretentious. But the origin of some of *Elaenia*'s exotic track titles are actually closer to home. "Nespole" is an obscure Mediterranean fruit but I've actually got a nespole tree in my garden in Farringdon! And "Argenté" was going to be called "Silver" until Dan [Snaith, Caribou] told me there was a track on his

album called "Silver". So it's a joke between us that I had to go French."

Musically, Shepherd is no lightweight. A graduate of Manchester's prestigious Chetham's School Of Music, he describes himself as a pianist first and foremost. He "got intensely into jazz" aged 15 but didn't actually visit a nightclub until he experienced an "epiphany" in Fabric after moving to London for university. *Elaenia* unifies all these passions in a way that feels natural. "In one sitting," he explains, "I can listen to Albert Ayler and Wiley and find something that they share."

Ayler's brand of spiritual jazz is the more prominent influence on *Elaenia*, although ironically enough for the son of vicar, Shepherd himself is not religious. "When I listen to spiritual music, I feel like it's taking me somewhere emotionally, but I don't necessarily connect with the same gods. The amazing thing about music is that it speaks to all gods and all transcendental experiences. It crosses all boundaries of religion, and that's beautiful."

Floating Points' upcoming UK tour features an 11-piece ensemble, in which Shepherd plays Fender Rhodes and an original '60s Buchla modular synth ("You can get a thunderous bass from it"). But don't expect to hear the album recreated. "In fact I can't replicate it! You might not hear anything you recognise – that, to me, is exciting. I've found that when the music goes off-script and things start to get unhinged, that's when everyone in the room goes wild." SAM RICHARDS

Floating Points' UK tour begins at London Brixton Electric on Feb 10

I'M YOUR FAN

"Sam believes in doing things without compromise and that there is value in creating beautiful things. It's very rare that you meet someone who aims so high and achieves so much."

DAN SNAITH,
CARIBOU



DAVID BOWIE

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UNDERWORLD

Barbara Barbara, We Face

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The progressive techno artisans hit peak form again, with their most streamlined and compelling set since '99's *Beaucoup Fish*.

RADIOHEAD

Spectre

WWW.SOUNDCLOUD.COM/RADIOHEAD/SPECTRE

The surprisingly suitable, implausibly rejected Bond theme sneaks out online. Big strings, "Nude" echoes, stuff about "bullet holes"; they shoot, they score.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Wayfaring Strangers: Cosmic American

Music NUMERO GROUP

Revelatory collection of lost '70s Americana, harvested from private press LPs that originally surfaced in minuscule runs.

WOODS

City Sun Eater In The River Of Light

WOODSIST

Transcending their lo-fi roots, the psych janglers step up another level, this time with mariachi horns in tow.

LCD SOUNDSYSTEM

Christmas Will Break

Your Heart DFA

No longer seasonal, but still worth a listen: James Murphy announces his return to LCD duty with this maudlin, tears-in-the-egg-nog – and Bowie-esque – ballad

BONNIE "PRINCE"

BILLY Pond Scum DOMINO

Will Oldham digs deep into the Palace archives for a selection of raw Peel sessions. Features a striking take on Prince's "The Cross".

HERON OBLIVION

Heron Oblivion SUBPOP

Espers and Comets On Fire alumni combine for a heavy, pungent rethink of folk-rock past.

DYLAN HOWE

Subterranean MOTORIK

As partial respite from the Bowie catalogue, we've returned to this 2014 gem: sublime jazz takes on the Berlin era, now sounding more elegiac than ever.

For regular updates, check our blogs at www.uncut.co.uk and follow @JohnRMulvey on Twitter



James Murphy

new music



sia
this is acting
29/01/2016



elton john
wonderful crazy night
05/02/2016



yoko ono
yes, i'm a witch too
12/02/2016



turin brakes
lost property
29/01/2016



lissie
my wild west
12/02/2016



gogo penguin
man made object
05/02/2016



emma pollock
in search of harperfield
29/01/2016



josephine foster
no more lamps in the morning
05/02/2016



basia bulat
good advice
12/02/2016



junior boys
big black coat
05/02/2016



all them witches
dying surfer
meets his maker
12/02/2016



night beats
who sold my generation
29/01/2016

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THE STARS ARE OUT TONIGHT

Your guide to this month's free CD

1 SCHOOL OF SEVEN BELLS

Open Your Eyes

We begin with a farewell and a track from SVIIB's final album, which was nearing completion when Benjamin Curtis died from lymphoma in 2013. Alejandra Deheza finished the record as a "love letter", a celebration of her comrade's life and the band they made together. This lead single is luminous, comforting – and yes, even joyful.



2 ROKIA TRAORÉ

Tu Voles

Although she was born in Mali and has since returned there, Traoré grew up living across different continents and absorbing a cosmopolitan range of influences, including French *chanson*, as we hear on this beguiling track from her new album, *Né So*. Elsewhere, John Parish's production lends a taut, rock vibe without ever losing contact with Traoré's distinctively African roots.

3 CAVERN OF ANTI-MATTER

tardis cymbals [Uncut Edit]

The second album from Stereolab co-founder Tim Gane's Berlin-based trio is, he tells us, built around "setting up tiny rhythmic cells and expanding on them, splitting the melody and stretching out". So much so that we reluctantly had to edit down this propulsive Krautrock-inspired trailer, which on the album runs to 13 fantastical minutes.

4 EMITT RHODES

Rainbow Ends

Back in the day, Rhodes produced a string of smart powerpop records that earned him a reputation as an American McCartney. Then he simply walked away. Now 75, the title track from his first album in 43

years finds his melodic gifts still in fine working order – and leaves us wondering what might have been.

5 FIELD MUSIC

Disappointed

When the artists currently known as Sunderland's Field Music posted the lead single from their fifth album online, Prince was so impressed that he tweeted a link. This blue-eyed Bowie-meets-Hall & Oates slice of funk-rock deserves to find similar retweeting favour.

6 PRINS THOMAS

A2

The nine tracks on the latest sprawling opus from the Norwegian king of space disco are simply titled 'A' to 'H' in reference to the eight sides of the four-LP vinyl version. Only side one of the first disc contains more than a single track – hence 'A2', an epic example of Thomas' take on the quasi-ambient voyaging he dubs "braindance".

7 MOUNT MORIAH

Cardinal Cross

The stars and planets align felicitously on this nugget from the North Carolina trio's third album of Southern Gothic myth-making. There's the kind of chugging guitar groove from Jenks Miller that you might associate with Crazy Horse, and a quivering, incantatory vocal from Heather McEntire on a lyric that's loaded with astrological metaphor.

8 MATMOS

Ultimate Care II Excerpt Eight

An entire album constructed from sounds sampled from a washing machine called the Whirlpool Ultimate Care II? Hearing is believing. "There's something

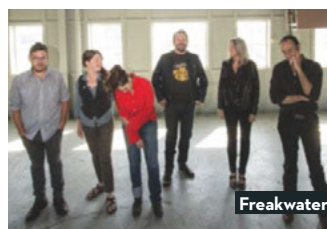


about the resonant frequency that really talks to me," says Martin Schmidt of the machine, which sits in the basement of the Baltimore home of electronic duo Matmos. Andy Warhol would surely have approved.

9 FREAKWATER

The Asp And The Albatross

It's more than a decade since we heard from Freakwater, while Janet Bean has concentrated on working with Eleventh Dream Day and Catherine Irwin on solo projects. Back together again and still plangently putting their own harmonious spin on alt.country, their return is both welcome and long overdue.



10 RANGDA

To Melt The Moon

The double helix of Sir Rick Bishop and Ben Chasny's lysergic guitar playing evokes acid-drenched visions of, say, Country Joe And The Fish's Barry Melton jamming with Quicksilver Messenger Service's John Cipollina back in San Fran's freewheeling heyday. You'll find this serpentine instrumental on the avant-rock trio's third album.

11 JOSEPHINE FOSTER

The Garden Of Earthly Delights

Sounding like a cross between the operatic soprano she once aspired to be and the late, great Karen Dalton, the quixotic Foster revisits a song she first recorded on 2008's

This Coming Gladness. In addition to fresh takes of her own songs, her new album also includes settings of Kipling and Joyce.

12 STEVE MASON

Planet Sizes

Produced by Elbow's Craig Potter, a celestial melody from the ex-Beta Band frontman's eclectic third album under his own name, fizzing with a spacious brio that seems to reflect his recent relocation to the bracing air of the South Coast.

13 THE WILDE FLOWERS

Memories

An evocative period piece with an affecting vocal by Robert Wyatt, from the seminal Canterbury band that birthed both Soft Machine and Caravan. Although The Wilde Flowers never released anything at the time, this comes from a lovingly assembled retrospective containing remastered versions of more than 20 of their 1960s demos.

14 BARRY ADAMSON

Evil Kind

Cinematic widescreen pop, taken from what the veteran Magazine/Bad Seeds man describes as a "virtual soundtrack album", the songs are accompanied by a photo-book of his pictures taken on a recent tour of America, intended to "glue together sound and image".

15 THIS HEAT

Twilight Furniture

Art-rock meets post-punk on the looped grooves of this austere yet engrossing track from the experimental trio's reissued and remastered 1979 'blue and yellow' debut. To this day it still sounds startling in the coherence of its avant boldness.



new music



album of the month

field music
common time
05/02/2016



animal collective
painting with
19/02/2016



bloc party
hymns
29/01/2016



joe volk
happenings and killings
19/02/2016



the cult
hidden city
05/02/2016



nevermen
nevermen
29/01/2016



dream theater
the astonishing
29/01/2016



money
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29/01/2016



wild nothing
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Clint Mansell

The ex-Pop Will Eat Itself co-frontman on golf clubs, life on the road in the mid-'80s and the best place in California to find proper beer...

I

THIS IS THE day after Clint Mansell's birthday and he is in surprisingly sprightly form. "It was pretty gentle, actually," he says from his home in the Hollywood Hills. "I went for some sushi and then down the pub with some friends for a few drinks. But I was pretty sensible. I was in bed for midnight." Such reserved behaviour is, Mansell

admits, a far cry from his youthful antics as the co-frontman of Pop Will Eat Itself: "We laughed and drank our way around the world," he admits. These days, Mansell is a Grammy-nominated soundtrack composer, whose credits include *Moon*, *Requiem For A Dream*, *The Wrestler* and *Black Swan*. It is a remarkable career swerve for the Coventry-born musician, though Mansell insists he can see a link between the frantic rap-rock of PWEI and his expansive, experimental soundtracks. "I've been fortunate to find an area where a bloke nearing his mid-fifties can make a living and feel somewhat relevant creating new music."

He has recently composed the score for Ben Wheatley's film, *High-Rise*, and is due to play UK shows next month. Meanwhile, he is soon to begin work on a new episode of Charlie Brooker's *Black Mirror* TV series and a film on Vincent van Gogh. "Everything brings out something new in me," he says.



concert was. We found a guy who had a van and he took us to Red Square. We saw the changing of the guard at 3am. There were two sections in the airport: one for tourists and one for Russians. In our section you could get Coca-Cola, but in the Russian section they served some grape juice out of a fountain. It was weird. When we

time, but I was with a friend last night who loves to play and he was trying to get me out on the course. It's one of those things; the less you play, the better you can be at it. When you haven't played in some time you tend to be much more relaxed and you can hit the ball... then it goes because you're all tense! What's my handicap? The game itself, I think. Probably my best day would have been about 20 over par, so Rory McIlroy's got nothing to worry about just yet.

STAR QUESTION



How does touring and performing film music compare with going on the road with PWEI?

What's better now, and what do you miss from then?

Miki Berenyi, Lush

I don't miss much, to be honest. We enjoyed making music, we enjoyed being with one another and it was the ideal way to spend a misspent youth/young adult life. But age changes you, without a doubt. I love playing live now. It was hard to convince people of what I was trying to do when I first started nearly 10 years ago. They got John Williams playing *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* at the Hollywood Bowl – but you and your little independent movies? Who's gonna want to see that? As it turned out, people did want to see it. My influences were Godspeed You! Black Emperor and Mogwai. The biggest difference between then and now is that it's more sedate. I can play sitting down. And I don't get drunk before I go onstage. ➔

STAR QUESTION



How did you find the transition from writing for a band, for yourself, to composing for a film?

Geoff Barrow, Portishead

Very bumpy. I was fortunate as the first two films that I did – *Pi* and *Requiem For A Dream* – were both with Darren Aronofsky. Because *Pi* was the first film for both of us, we didn't have the burden of industry experience. We were doing what we wanted, in the way we wanted to do it, without anybody who was experienced saying, "You can't do that." The transitional difficulties came when I then started working with other directors, who were more versed in the way of the business and – yeah – I found that difficult.

Being a composer, you're a gun for hire. You've come in to do a job and if someone says, "It needs a reggae tinge" – which may not have been your first thought – you have to add a reggae tinge. Also, you go from writing a three-minute pop song to an hour's worth of music for a film. There's a fear, early on, that you may not be able to do that. But once you get beyond that, you realise the job is doing what's required and not just what you want.

What do you remember about the Poppies' trip to the Soviet Union in 1988? *Miranda, Moscow*
Perestroika was just starting to happen. We flew into Moscow and missed our connecting flight. In those days, you couldn't just go and get a hotel. We had to wait in the airport to get a flight the next morning to Lithuania, where the

got to Vilnius, they had these hard currency shops where if you had pounds or dollars you could buy gin, bread, tampons, whatever. But go into a Russian store and there was nothing. It was very sad. I felt humbled. I was only about 25, I didn't know much about anything at all, but the gig was fine. Who else was on the bill? Billy Bragg. We were the only westerners.

Is it true the Poppies were all mad golf fans, and when you were agreeing a deal with your record company you stipulated all band members received a set of high-end golf clubs?

Craig Brown, via email

That's 50 per cent true. Me and [PWEI bandmates] Adam had the golf clubs. Richard and Graham had stereos. Me and Adam used to play golf with our A&R man, Korda Marshall, and our manager, Craig Jennings. We were on a golf tip at the time. I haven't played in a long



“My wrestling
interest peaked
in the '70s with
World Of Sport
on a Saturday
afternoon!”

STAR QUESTION



How difficult is it to deal with temp tracks on a film score, particularly when a director uses your own previous scores to temp with? *Duncan Jones*

Yes, it can be a problem! You get what's called "temp love", where the director constantly refers back to the temp track. If at all possible, I like to see the film first with no music in before I start working on it. It's one of those things: you can't un-ring a bell. With Darren, we never temped a film up until *Noah*, and we only had to do that because the studio wanted to test it. It was a very big film and, without a doubt, at that sort of level you're dancing with the devil. Somebody's put in a lot of money and they're going to want to have a say in how it is used. So you have to accept those situations and know about them going in. Temp's a tough one.

I saw you on tour with *The Shop Assistants*. What do you recall about tour support in the mid-'80s? *Leona Murphy, Newcastle*

The first proper tour we did was supporting Primal Scream. They were a real band, they had records out, they were signed to Creation. We had been flapping around just trying to write songs, let alone get a deal. We did the first EP with one-minute songs and we used a John Bull kit to print on the brown paper bags. We got a Peel session, which meant that we could get some gigs. We got to a point in '86 when we could do gigs on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. We were only getting 50 quid a night, but that was enough, over three nights, to rent a van. We couldn't afford a hotel so we'd have a mattress in the back of the van. We could get drunk, park the van outside the gig and sleep it off. This routine worked well. We had fun and that was the dream. We were doing it. We were playing our music, and being a band, and people were watching us and listening to us. It was awesome.

Having written the score for *The Wrestler*, was your interest in wrestling piqued? And if so, who is your favourite wrestler and why? *Stephen Berry via email*

My wrestling interest peaked back in the '70s with *World Of Sport* on a Saturday afternoon! Big Daddy, Adrian Street and Kendo Nagasaki. So no, I didn't really become a new convert. I said to Darren: "What is it that interests you about this?" I couldn't see it – probably why I'm not a filmmaker. He said he thought

Clint Mansell with Pop Will Eat Itself onstage at Heaven, London, 1995



it was interesting: what do you do when you can no longer do what you want to do? You can apply that to anything. Making music, writing, whatever. What if suddenly you don't have the ability to do the thing that you love? I met Mickey Rourke, but to be honest I was intimidated by him. We did a Q&A after a screening. Me and Darren, Mickey Rourke, Marisa Tomei and Evan Rachel Wood. He's quite a presence. A character, for sure.

"We couldn't afford a hotel so we'd have a mattress in our van"

What's your favourite Black Country beer?

Max Jenkins, Redcar, Yorks
Holden's used to be my favourite, but Bathams has come through over the past few years. Can I get it easily in Hollywood? No. There's a great liquor store – as they say here – called Cap'n Cork and they have a good selection of imported beers from all over Europe, Australia, Iceland. There's another store here, Bevmo, which sells Timothy Taylor, but I generally just stick with the Old Speckled Hen, which you can get here. There's a good craft brewery here called Eagle Rock

Brewery. I was first drawn to them because their aesthetic is constructivist. All the beers are called Solidarity and Revolution! They've got an IPA called Populist. If I drink an American craft beer I go for a pale ale. There's another company here, St Archer, who do a very nice pale ale.

STAR QUESTION



Do you see rhythms and movements across your body of work, or do you see each score standing entirely

on its own? *Ben Wheatley*
Yeah, you can probably recognise my work, though I'd like to think they all have an individuality. Ben calls it "Mansellian"! [laughs] When I first started in film, I felt that a composer was a jack-of-all-trades – a bit of jazz, a bit of reggae, all these things. But over time, I've decided that isn't how I want to do it. My enthusiasm for the projects I pick is such that I find a film that speaks to me and allows something of my own experience to come out through the music. That, then, will hopefully be supportive for the film itself. To some extent, that puts me in a certain musical area of experience. I grew up on Bowie, the Banshees and Joy Division, but also John Carpenter and Ennio Morricone. You could look through my record collection and go, "Well, I can see how this all fits together."

What is the lowest attended gig The Poppies ever played?

Archie, Glasgow
Oh! West Palm Beach, Florida, three people, three payers. It was an amazing gig as well. We did a lot of poorly attended shows, particularly when we were first playing around Birmingham and Stourbridge. I remember one, we had seven people come to. We developed this mentality where you can't blame the people that turned up for those who didn't. So we would always raise our game for those shows, 'cos otherwise playing to no people was really embarrassing. We did a gig on the Gold Coast in Australia once – and we did well in Australia – but this one gig was really poorly attended. Roger Grierson, our tour promoter, came backstage and went: "The crowd went mild!"

What was the live music scene like in Stourbridge when you were growing up?

Charlie Jones, Manchester
Robert Plant went to the same school as me, and Zeppelin were the folklore. Everybody was a biker in Stourbridge. The main biker pub was the Royal Exchange; you'd just hear Purple and Hawkwind coming out of there. It was a scary place. In 1978 we were 15, so we were the first punks in Stourbridge. It was a little tough, especially at school. It was all UFO, Floyd, Rainbow. Everyone had long hair. So when I cut my hair, it was a real statement. By 1982, which is when new romantic and goth started, we had make-up and spiked hair. I got punched once or twice... but I suppose most people did at that age. Brilliant! ☺

*Clint Mansell plays the UK in March. Visit www.clintmansell.com for details. **High-Rise** is released in the UK on March 18*



"A character for sure": Mickey Rourke in Aronofsky's *The Wrestler*

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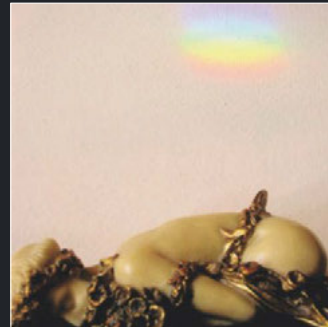
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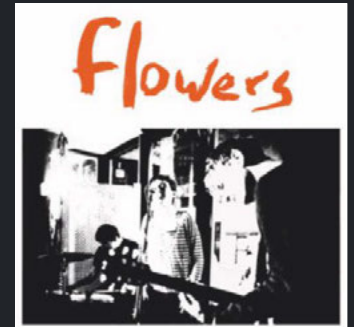
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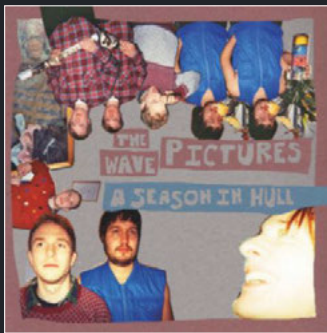
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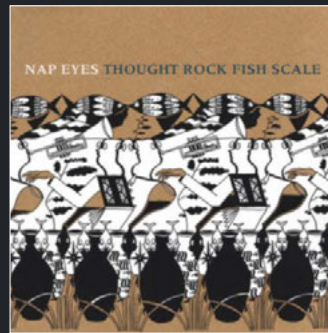
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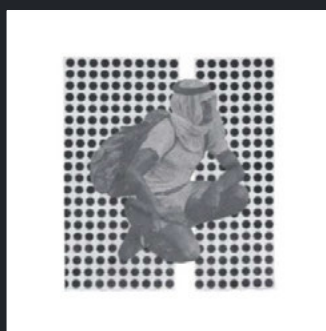
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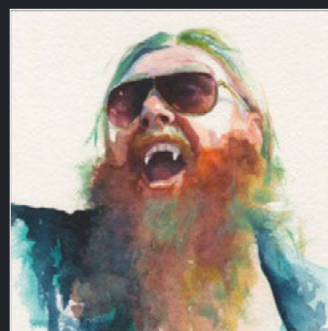
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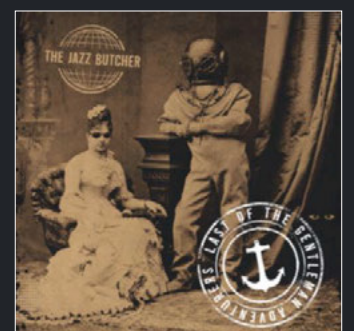
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“If you’re good to the ghosts, they’re good to you...”

Welcome to Hurricane Mills, the second-most-haunted house in Tennessee and, for the past 50 years, home of the supernaturally gifted LORETTA LYNN. Here, the Queen Of Country Music looks back on her sparkling career, her wayward spouse, her legendary friends — from the Cash family to Jack White — and the spirits that surround her to this day.

Story: Jaan Uhelszki

THERE IS NO mistaking the route that leads to Loretta Lynn’s estate in Middle Tennessee. At five-mile intervals along the freeway that bisects the Volunteer State from East to West, there are folksy billboards showing the Queen Of Country Music in a red, checked cowboy shirt. Her head is tilted to one side, her well-appointed brown curls grazing her collarbone, while the hoarding invites you to “Visit the Legend Loretta Lynn in Hurricane Mills”.

In fact, more than 500,000 people come through the doors of Lynn’s antebellum mansion each year. Lynne recalls the Sunday afternoon in 1966 when she and her late husband, Oliver “Doolittle/Mooney” Lynn, got lost on the back roads of Humphreys County. “I seen that house and I said, ‘Doo, I want that house right there,’” Lynn explains. There was one problem, though: the house came with a whole town, including a working grist mill, a post office, a waterfall, a store and a gas station. But what Loretta wants, Loretta generally gets, as evidenced by a magnet on the restaurant-quality refrigerator in her airy open kitchen that reads, “When Mama ain’t happy, nobody is happy”. Is it true? Lynn takes off her rhinestone-encrusted reading glasses and says with a throaty chuckle, “What do you think?”

The couple didn’t waste much time putting a down payment on the 3500-acre town. Money wasn’t really

an object any more for the singer, who grew up poor in Paintsville, Kentucky. She’d released two albums that year, *I Like ’Em Country*, which reached No 2 on the *Billboard* charts, and the vituperously autobiographical *You Ain’t Woman Enough*, which reached No 1, and whose title song became Lynn’s biggest hit up to that point. Based on a dalliance Doo was having with another woman, “You Ain’t Woman Enough (To Take My Man)” was a turning point for Lynn. The song’s true-to-life lyrics cracked with female empowerment and righteous indignation — something unheard of in country music in those less-enlightened times. Lynn continued to refine the theme in songs like “Don’t Come Home A Drinkin’ (With Lovin’ On Your Mind)”, “Your Squaw Is On The Warpath”, “Rated X” and “Fist City”, where women didn’t just stand by their men, but stood up to them. Perhaps most radical of all, there was “The Pill” — which intimated that, with birth control, a woman had the same rights as a man. It was clear that Lynn was drawing from her own life and marriage in her increasingly bold songwriting. “I wasn’t doing anything — what did you call it? — revolutionary,” she insists. “I was just saying what everyone else was really thinking, but didn’t talk about it in public. It turned out, I was just the first one to write it like the women lived it.”

Today, Lynn is dressed in a sparkly pink shirt, tight velvet trousers and sequinned black house slippers. ➔



Loretta Lynn
athome, 1978



Loretta Lynn: breaking new ground for women

Lynn no longer lives in the antebellum mansion, but in a smaller property across the driveway. It is here that she sits in an oversized red leather sectional. As we talk, Lynn angles her head toward a bigger house that lies across an asphalt walkway. "It's silly, I know, but I fell in love with the house because it reminded me of the house in *Gone With The Wind*. But you know, this place was never really a plantation. But I'll tell you one thing, it is haunted."

In fact, Lynn's ranch has been certified the second most-haunted place in Tennessee. Located high on a hill, the 14-room property

was built in 1845 and was used as a hospital in the Civil War. According to records at nearby Middle Tennessee State University, it was also the site of a Civil War battle on July 22, 1863, where 19 soldiers lost their lives. All of them are buried in a cemetery near the church erected on the property – one of three cemeteries on the 6,500-acre estate.

In the old part of the house lies the 'brown room', where Lynn's eldest son, Jack Benny Lynn, slept and experienced his own visitation after coming home one night and falling asleep

on his bed with his clothes on. He was woken by someone trying to remove his boots: a soldier dressed in an American Civil War uniform.

Does any of this bother Lynn? "No. If you're good to the ghosts, they're good to you," she says.

Such pragmatism has stood Lynn in good stead down the years. While she appears every inch the lady, Lynn isn't beyond letting things come to a physical showdown when she feels she had to defend what she saw as rightfully hers. "Fist City", inspired by a fling Doolittle had with a Tennessee bus driver, used little poetic licence to make its point: "*You'd better close your face and stay out of my way/If you don't wanna go to Fist City.*" Did you ever really punch anyone?

"I wish I'd punched her more than once," she nods almost imperceptibly, her eyes narrowing a little. "I still get mad thinking about it, so let's not talk about it any more."

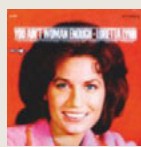
But Lynn never considered divorce. "I always said: 'Why trade in one nut you know for a nut you don't know?'"

Instead, Lynn used her husband's antics as rich source material for her songs. "Poor Doo, he couldn't get away with nothing," Lynn admits. "If he did anything I'd write a song about it and the world knew what he'd been up to. Good thing for most men their wives aren't songwriters."

Lynn's songwriting earned them millions. She was in high demand, sometimes spending as many as 250 days a year on the road. "One time we were arguing about some wallpaper we were going to put up, and Doo said to me, 'I'm here more than you are, so I should get to choose.' That just stopped me in my tracks. My one big regret is I had to leave my kids so much. But I didn't know any other way to do it."

"When Peggy and I were in school, our teacher asked me if I missed our mama," Patsy Lynn Russell, one of Lynn's twin daughters, tells me. "And I said no. I mean, how can you miss what you've never known. But my mom, who is really smart, made sure that my dad was there with us, and she hired Gloria [Land] to take care of us. There is no way in hell my mom could have ever, as a woman and as a mother, done what she did without having my dad and Gloria as stability for her children, for her home and for herself."

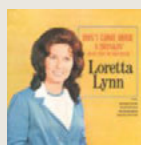
Classic Lynn Cuts!



"YOU AIN'T WOMAN ENOUGH"

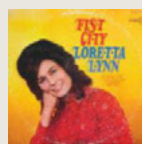
YOU AIN'T WOMAN ENOUGH (1966)

Lynn lays down a gauntlet for the woman who had designs on her husband, telling her a woman like her "ain't worth a dime". As a demoralising technique, it's very effective.



"DON'T COME HOME A DRINKIN' (WITH LOVIN' ON YOUR MIND)"

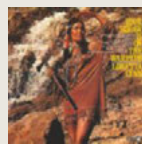
DON'T COME HOME A DRINKIN' (1967) Always an incipient feminist, this song is a battle cry for any woman sick of being taken granted by a tomcatting husband. "Treat me right or treat me as gone."



"FIST CITY"

FIST CITY (1968)

"You've been makin' your brags around town/That you've been a lovin' my man," says Lynn, in this song inspired by a Tennessee bus driver who pursued Lynn's husband, Doo.



"YOUR SQUAW IS ON THE WARPATH"

YOUR SQUAW IS ON THE WARPATH (1969)

The LP shows Lynn dressed in Native American clothing, with her left hand over her head as if searching for something. Peace? Fidelity? Lynn again uses her marital discord for hit-making.

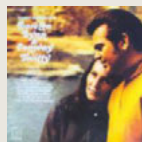


"COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER"

COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER (1970)

Lynn's calling card, it is more poetic reportage than song. Like Parton's "Coat of Many Colors", it sparkles with

verisimilitude and affection for her impoverished past.



"AFTER THE FIRE IS GONE"

WE ONLY MAKE BELIEVE (1971)

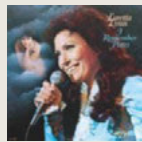
Lynn's voice was never more expressive and ascendant in this duet – with Conway Twitty – of what happens when love goes cold.



"THE PILL"

BACK TO THE COUNTRY (1975)

Maybe the most controversial of Lynn's songs, its sociological significance is important: "All those years I've stayed at home/While you had all your fun," sings Lynn. "I'm making up for all those years/Since I've got the pill."



"SHE'S GOT YOU"

I REMEMBER PATSY (1977)

This song was written by Hank Cochran and

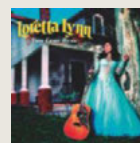
went to No 1 in the Country charts in 1962 for Patsy Cline. Loretta paid tribute to her best friend, taking this, her tremulous version, to the same chart position in 1977.



"OUT OF MY HEAD AND BACK IN MY BED"

OUT OF MY HEAD AND BACK IN MY BED (1978)

Always the quintessential lady, this song, another Country No 1, expresses Lynn's desires as a more emotionally and sexually liberated woman.



"MISS BEING MRS."

VAN LEAR ROSE (2004)

Featuring Jack White. Never has a song conveyed as much sadness or honesty as this song Lynn wrote about her husband's passing. "I took off my wedding band/And put it on my right hand/I miss being Mrs tonight."

"Everybody's always thought of my mom as being this strong female figure, and she was, but she never emasculated my father. It was the secret to the marriage. She always made him feel like he was the most important person in the world."

"Loretta really makes you feel like she really gets you," says John Carter Cash, the son of Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash. "She is just like my mom was. They were country girls that were sharper than a tack and didn't have any airs. My mom and grandmother liked her so much they wanted her to join the Carter Family."

"I've always told my kids to always be good to people," says Lynn solemnly. "Nobody is better than anybody else. No matter who they are. I was born and raised this way, that I would be just plain old me. And I can't be nothing else."

"There is no one like her," adds Carter Cash. "She may stay on the phone 20 minutes with a wrong number. She opens her heart to everyone, and being around so many quote-unquote stars in the industry my whole life, I cherish the ones that are real."

LYNN USED TO babysit Carter Cash; but in 2007, their relationship changed. Carter Cash produced a tribute album for his mother – *Anchored In Love* – and invited Lynn to record a version of "Wildwood Flower". Afterward, Patsy Lynn asked if she and her mother could visit his recording studio with an eye to recording some songs. In the end, they worked on more than 100. Over the past few years, Lynn has been in and out of the studio, re-recording some of her earliest hits and some traditional music that never has seen the light of day. "It was fun making this music," Carter Cash says. "Late in my father's life, music became his only life's-blood therapy. The music is therapy for Loretta too. You turn the machines on and capture her. She has this amazing energy and this booming voice. I guarantee you're pushing as many decibels today as 1967."

"I have this first album coming out, *Full Circle*," says Lynn. "Then there'll be a Christmas album and a religious album. I cut some of the old hill songs that Mommy taught me. She was a great singer. And I've got another cut of some of the biggest hits I wrote for Decca that you can't find anymore."

On *Full Circle*, she has two stellar guests. Willie Nelson duets on a song she wrote called "Lay Me Down" and Elvis Costello collaborates on "Everything It Takes". Costello had come down to Carter Cash's studio in 2007 to write a couple of songs with Lynn – two of which he has since recorded: "Pardon Me, Madam, My Name Is Eve" and "I Felt The Chill Before The Winter Came". While he was there, Lynn and Carter Cash asked if he'd mind singing with her on a track. "I learnt it that day and sang harmony on it, and it was pretty cool," he tells *Uncut*.

"Elvis is a funny guy," says Lynn. "He told somebody about our writing session. How he brought his computer out and was writing on it, and there I was sitting with a pencil in my hand and a piece of paper. But that was how it was."

Costello and Nelson are just the most recent collaborations Lynn has enjoyed. In 2004, she paired with Jack White for *Van Lear Rose*, her best album since 1977's *I Remember Patsy*. The record, thoughtful and minimal, brought her to the attention of a whole new audience and scored two Grammys. White – who dedicated The White Stripes' *White Blood Cells* to Lynn – seemed to



Elvis Costello



"She was like a ball of fire"

Elvis Costello on Loretta Lynn

"WHEN I WENT to Nashville in '81 to make *Almost Blue* – where we did other people's songs – the first song we cut was Loretta's 'Honky Tonk Girl'. It's a weird song for me to record, because I didn't even reverse the gender. The best thing I cut was a song I learned from her record, *I Remember Patsy* – 'He's Got You'. Loretta was our guiding light. While I was in Nashville, this girl came by our hotel and she turned out to be the president of Loretta's fan club, and we all joined. I didn't actually meet Loretta until maybe 2007. I knew John Carter since he was a lad, because I knew his parents. My friend – and producer of my first five albums – married into the family so we got the benefit of Nick

[Lowe]'s son-in-law status. We were treated very kindly by the Cash-Carter clan. I'd been back in touch with John Carter, and I went to see him when I was in Nashville on a day off when I was on tour with Bob Dylan.

"I was there on my own and suddenly Loretta arrives. She was like a ball of fire. She's got this box file, with 'SONGS' written on it. She tips it out and every kind of piece of paper tumbles out. Telephone note pads. Fancy stationery. Hotel stationery. Bits of old receipts. Bits of cardboard boxes. All with lyrics written on them. Some of them are quite famous, and I even said, 'Why isn't this in the Country Music Hall of Fame?' Some of the songs

were half a verse and some of them were just titles, like 'Thank God For Jesus'.

There was one that said, 'Pardon Me, Madam, My Name Is Eve'. I said, 'I know what that is.' Loretta said, 'Well, what is it?' 'It's Eve's song to Adam's second wife.' She laughed at that. I told her, 'I can write that if you'll let me.' So I did, and that went on my album *Momofuku*. Then we got to work on this one title that she had, 'I Felt The Chill Before The Winter Came'. I could hear it in my head the minute she showed it to me. I just started playing and we were easily completing the couplets. Any time I went off the rails into anything more baroque, musically or lyrically, she'd rein me back in to keep it plain. I think she allowed me the line 'a linger of perfume'. She liked that one, but that was about as fancy as it got. Whenever I attempted anything more, she'd question it. That was good, because it meant that it was in her voice."

"I WAS THE FIRST ONE TO WRITE IT AS WOMEN LIVED IT" LORETTA LYNN

push her to new heights and emotional depths, urging her to tap into the well of sass and sadness that coloured her best works, and giving her the graceful platform to mourn Doo, who passed away in 1996. White not only got her writing again – she wrote or co-wrote everything on the disc – but he coaxed out her most fevered performance in years. "You know, Jack'd do anything for me and I'd do anything for Jack. I love Jack. Jack loves me," Lynn tells me airily.

What's your relationship like? It's rather unconventional, right? "You mean with Jack? We're sisters and brothers."

"Hmm, I'm not sure that's what it is," chimes in Russell, who did pre-production on *Van Lear Rose*. "It's the weirdest thing. The creativity between the two is off the charts. It's like walking in on a romance you're not supposed to see."

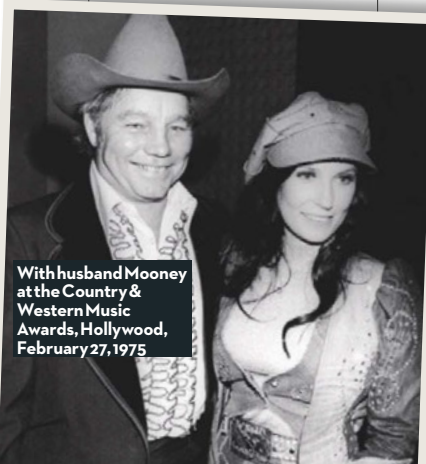
"Oh, Patsy Watsyl!" admonishes her mother. "It's more like what he don't come up with, I do."

"So why does Jack always say to me, 'I know your mom had a facelift, every time I see her she looks younger and younger,'" counters the younger Lynn. "So now you tell me there's not a little something going on?"

"Patsy! You know, I haven't had one. I don't even do anything special," Lynn says, ignoring the implication, but not altogether displeased.

"I never used anything on my face except soap."

While she and White haven't recorded together since 2004's *Van Lear Rose*, they speak on the phone often. "I'm just starting a song that I think maybe Jack and I will do," Lynn says. "I'm going to call it 'Get You A Baby, Now Rock It' or 'She's Your Baby, Now Rock Her'. It's going to be a little rock song," she says. "You know where he got the Third Man label name? There's a song called 'The Third Man' that I did back 25 years ago." ➔



With husband Mooney at the Country & Western Music Awards, Hollywood, February 27, 1975

DESPITE A BROKEN shoulder and a bout of pneumonia two years ago, Lynn is thriving. You are likely to find her digging up weeds from her flower garden, pattering around the kitchen or doting on one of her nine cats (there are also two possums and a raccoon). Her tenacious work rate is commendable, but why does she work so hard? Is it from a sense of self-doubt, that she always feel the need to prove herself? “I do,” says Lynn, with a nod. “It’s funny you’d say that, because you’re the only one ever said that to me. But I really believe that why I made it was I work so hard. And I’ve noticed that none of the other girls in Nashville work that hard. None of ‘em.

“When I hit 50, I thought, ‘My God, my life is over,’” she continues. “That was a horrible year for me. And after I went over 50, I thought, ‘Well, hell, I’m just gonna go on forever. When I retire is when they put me under.’”

Such maudlin talk leads Lynn on to the subject of Elvis Presley. The two of them never met but used to talk on the phone regularly. But Jerry Lee Lewis confided to her that a collaboration wasn’t going to happen. “Jerry Lee and me were doing a show and we could see Elvis’ place from where the building was. I said, ‘I’m worried about Elvis.’ And he said, ‘Loretta, I’m gonna tell you something but don’t repeat it.’ ‘Course, it’s over now. He said Elvis won’t be alive for two weeks if they don’t quit hauling dope into him. First thing I thought of when Elvis died, Jerry Lee already warned me that within a week he’d be gone.

“I’ve outlasted most of them,” she continues, without any joy. You could count them off: her husband and two of her children; her best friend, Patsy Cline, who died in a plane crash in 1963; her singing partner Conway Twitty, who passed away in the same hospital where Doolittle was having open-heart surgery; and Tammy Wynette, who died in 1998, eight days before Loretta’s birthday. “I don’t know what the good Lord has in mind for me,” she admits. “I don’t do anything special. I hate to



Top: with Jack White, from the *Van Lear Rose* cover session, 2004. Above: new album *Full Circle*

exercise, but I’d walk if someone would walk with me. But it’s pretty hard for me to get out and walk because people watch the house. They see that I’m out and they start following me.”

While the tourists may come to visit the museum, with all the props and sets from the *Coal Miner’s Daughter* biopic, Lynn’s costumes, awards and ephemera, the rebuilt childhood home from Butcher Hollow, or even the Cadillac where she wrote all her hits, in the end they come to the Double L Loretta Lynn Dude Ranch mostly to catch a glimpse of her. “A little while ago a couple of people come up to the door as they seen me out here in the hall. I had this little short gown on, and my hair was in one of them clamps. I looked like the devil with no make-up on. They said we’re here to see Loretta Lynn. I said you’re in the wrong place, she’s not here.”

And they believed you?

“Well, I wasn’t really there, was I? Not the Loretta Lynn they wanted to see.” ☯

Full Circle is out via Legacy Recordings/Sony Music on March 4

The Haunting Of Hurricane Mills

Inside Loretta Lynn’s spooky mansion

LORETTA LYNN SEEMS at peace with things that go bump in the night. She has invited the Travel Channel, *Celebrity Ghost Stories* and TV medium and clairvoyant James van Praagh to her Hurricane Mills plantation in Tennessee to film. Van Praagh wanted to spend the night in the “brown room”, in the old part of the house.

Daughter Patsy Lynn Russell leads *Uncut* upstairs in the big house saying, “We don’t usually get people come up here...”

The staircase is lined with framed covers of all Loretta Lynn’s albums, arranged in chronological order. Intermittently, the albums are askew. “Yeah, we’ll come in here and they’ll all be messed up,” Russell admits. A small landing connects her childhood bedroom with her twin sister Peggy’s. In the middle was their nanny’s room. “Peggy and I used to see a woman dressed in white. She’d stand over our beds. I’d be really quiet and hope she’d leave me alone and go to Peggy’s. When I finally told my sister that, she said she did the same thing!”

At the top of the stars is a neat, well-kept room—the “brown room”. The room is much colder than the rest of the house. “Jack saw a ghost in his room,” Lynn says, talking about her son. “I’m sure Patsy told you that soldier isn’t the only ghost who lives here. I used

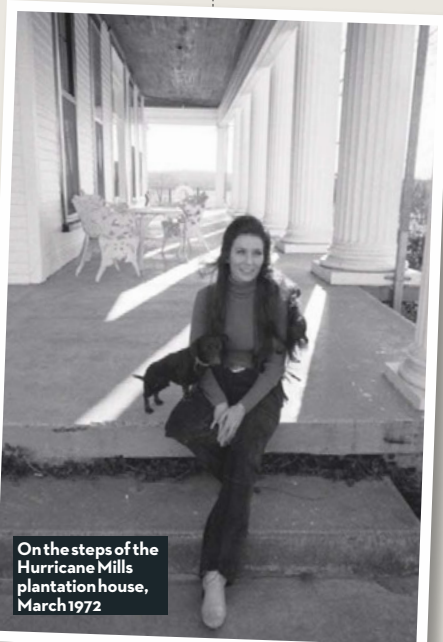
to hear someone in high heels walking up and down the back stairs. I’d wake up Doo and say, ‘Do you hear that?’ He’d tell me he didn’t hear nothin’, just go back to sleep. But I knew he heard it too. There’s the woman who stays upstairs dressed all in white. My twins used to see her all the time. I saw her once on the balcony, wringing her hands. When I walked toward her, she just disappeared. It turns out she lived here and she lost her baby.”

Not to be left out, her second son Ernest saw two soldiers standing at the foot of his bed when he slept in the same room. Today, a man who had come to clean the carpets in the mansion left unnerved, saying he’d seen something.

The spirits, meanwhile, have a long connection with the Lynn family. Loretta’s mother, Clara, used to read tea leaves with uncanny accuracy. She told Lynn that she had to leave the place because if she didn’t, one of her children would drown there. In a segment filmed for *Celebrity Ghost Stories* last year, Lynn told the reporter Kim Russo, “My kids all knew how to swim. I believed Mommy to be wrong.” But on July 22, 1984, Jack Benny Lynn died attempting to cross the nearby Duck River on horseback. “That changed everything,” Russell says. “It just left a hole in the family. My mom was really bad for a while. We all were.”

The family moved out of the mansion that year, to a smaller, purpose-built house. They turned the original property into a tourist attraction.

A séance Lynn held there revealed one of the ghosts as James Anderson, original owner of the plantation. Lynn believes it was he who locked three of her female staff members on the balcony when they were attempting to hang banners.



On the steps of the Hurricane Mills plantation house, March 1972

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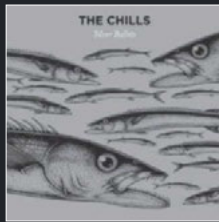
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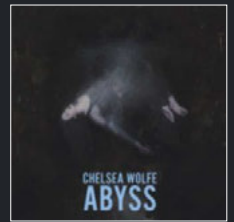
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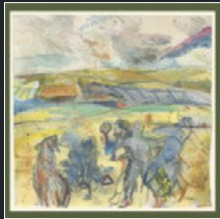
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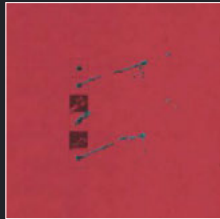
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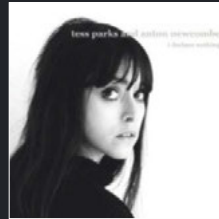
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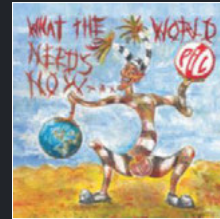
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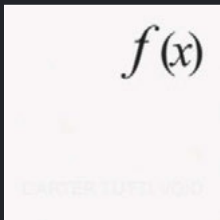
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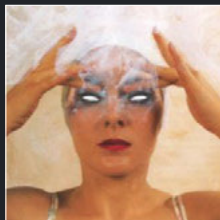
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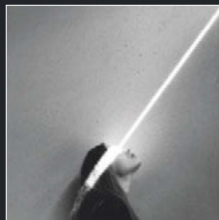
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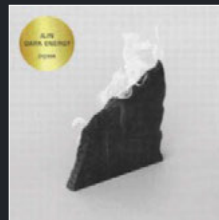
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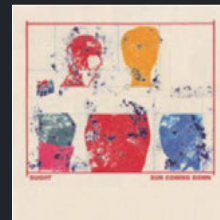
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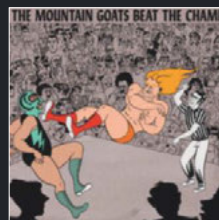
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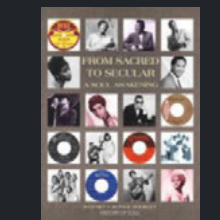
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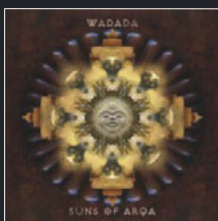


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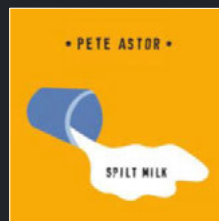


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David Bowie | 1947-2016

“In the event
That this fantastic voyage
Should turn to erosion
And we never get old
Remember it is true, dignity is valuable
But our lives are valuable too”

The extraordinary life and music of David Bowie,
remembered by his closest collaborators
and *Uncut*’s David Cavanagh

David Bowie
at home in
Beckenham,
1972

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Bowie in New York,
photographed by
Jimmy King, at the
tail end of 2015





IN A CELEBRATED 1994 interview, the dramatist Dennis Potter, diagnosed with terminal cancer and drinking liquid morphine to dull the pain, remarked on the peculiar routines of Homo sapiens who have yet to outgrow their use. "We're the one animal that knows that we're going to die," he pointed out, "and yet we carry on paying our mortgages, doing our jobs, moving about, behaving as though there's eternity in a sense, and we tend to

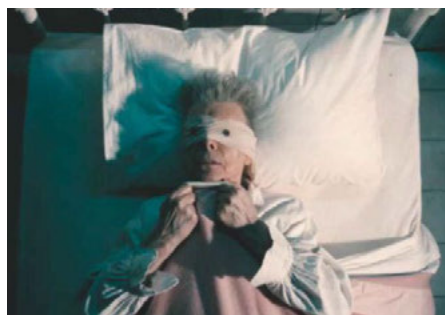
forget that life can only be defined in the present tense. It is, and it is now only."

Five years later, in a boardroom in the Manhattan offices of Virgin Records, David Bowie – 52 years old, still smoking Marlboros, but looking astonishingly young and fit – told the journalist David Quantick: "I'm very happy to deal and only deal with the existing 24 hours I'm going through. I'm not inclined to even think too heavily about the end of the week or the week I've just come through. The present is really the place to be."

Bowie had just been discussing a song called "Seven" on his latest album, *Hours...*, which seemed to be about a man given just seven days to live. Wandering distractedly through an unnamed city in the rain, the man thought of his father, his mother and his brother (three people certain to trigger involuntary spasms of psychiatric hypothesis in seasoned Bowie-watchers if the song had been autobiographical), before reaching a sort of measured perspective on his options. "I've got seven ways to live my life or seven ways to die." For better or

worse, the present was the place to be.

Almost 17 years remained in the life of David Bowie when he wrote those words, but the fate he was to share with Potter – incurable liver cancer – drew him back, in the end, to matters of finite days and the urgent present. Both men created their final work in a race against time, knowing that death would come, if not too soon, then soon enough. Both of them chose, surely not by coincidence, the same Biblical figure for a title: Lazarus of Bethany, who died and was restored to life by a Christ miracle. Potter's last TV



drama was *Cold Lazarus*, a science-fiction prophecy set in a Britain overrun by ideological terrorists and sinister corporations. Bowie, whose own science-fiction prophecy had begun with fleas the size of rats sucking on rats the size of cats, made his last public appearance on December 12, 2015 at the New York premiere of *Lazarus*, a musical he co-wrote with the playwright Enda Walsh. Based on Bowie's character in the 1976 film *The Man Who Fell To Earth*, its premiere was followed by a download single (also called "Lazarus") and a video,

released in early January alongside the new album, *Blackstar* (★). The video showed a blindfolded Bowie writhing in a hospital bed while a healthier, more energetic David emerged from a wardrobe – the Bowie metaphor to end all Bowie metaphors – and began writing furiously at a desk. He was a man up against an implacable deadline. We now know that he had only a short time to live, and we know that he knew it, too. And that he wanted us to know it after he'd gone.

"David Bowie has died many deaths yet he is still with us," *Pitchfork* began its review of *Blackstar* on January 7, as Bowie, unbeknown to the media, gradually approached the end of his life. *Pitchfork* was referring to the grand parade of Bowie characters (Major Tom, Ziggy Stardust, Aladdin Sane, the Thin White Duke) which he'd visualised, corporealised, inhabited for as long as they fitted him, then discarded and replaced in the wardrobe as empty costumes. And there were other incarnations that didn't have names: the bleach-blond Bowie of the *Let's Dance* era; the smouldering redhead on the cover of *Young Americans*; the long-haired Bowie on the front of *Hours...*; cradling, Virgin Mary-like, the head of his predecessor, the carrot-topped Bowie of *Earthling*. And on and on they went, back to the hippy tresses of *Hunky Dory* and the bouffants and perms of the '60s. Bowie, being Bowie, had made a point of changing his image from one project to the next, even before he had a fanbase to notice him doing it. "He is pop music's ultimate Lazarus," *Pitchfork* declared, a nice way of unifying a theory, an off-Broadway musical and a late-period Bowie song. But then, three days after the review was uploaded, the morning clocks chimed "seven" and the news channels

JIMMY KING; © PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

A MESSAGE TO LONDON FROM DAVE

TAKEN FROM *MELODY MAKER* | FEBRUARY 26 | 1966

WITHOUT DOUBT DAVID Bowie has talent. And also without doubt it will be exploited. For Mr Bowie, a 19-year-old Bromley boy, not only writes and arranges his own numbers, but he is also helping Tony Hatch to write a musical score, and the numbers for a TV show. As if that wasn't enough, David also designs shirts and suits for John Stephen of the famed Carnaby Street clan. "Also I want to go to Tibet. It's a fascinating place, y'know. I'd like to take a holiday and have a look inside the monasteries. The Tibetan monks, Lamas, bury themselves inside the mountains for weeks and only eat every three days. They're ridiculous – and it's said they live for centuries."

It should be stated that David is a well-read student of astrology and a believer in reincarnation...

"As far as I'm concerned the whole idea of Western life – the life we live now – is wrong. These are hard convictions to put into songs though. At the moment I write nearly all of my songs round London. No, I should say the people who live in London – and the lack of real life they have. The majority just don't know what life is."

Every number in Dave's stage act is an original that he has written. As he says, the theme is

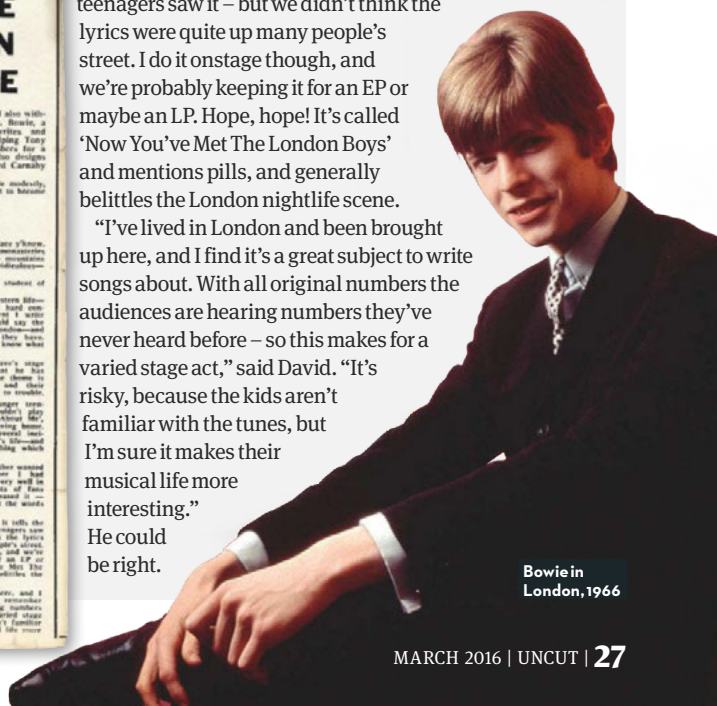
usually London kids and their lives. However, it leads to trouble.

"Several of the younger teenagers' programmes wouldn't play 'Can't Help Thinking About Me', because it is about leaving home. The number relates to several incidents in every teenager's life – and leaving home is something which always comes up. Tony Hatch and I rather wanted to do another number I had written. It goes down very well in the stage act, and lots of fans said I should have released it – but Tony and I thought the words were a bit strong.

"In what way? Well, it tells the story of life as some teenagers saw it – but we didn't think the lyrics were quite up many people's street. I do it onstage though, and we're probably keeping it for an EP or maybe an LP. Hope, hope! It's called 'Now You've Met The London Boys' and mentions pills, and generally belittles the London nightlife scene.

"I've lived in London and been brought up here, and I find it's a great subject to write songs about. With all original numbers the audiences are hearing numbers they've never heard before – so this makes for a varied stage act," said David. "It's risky, because the kids aren't familiar with the tunes, but I'm sure it makes their musical life more interesting."

He could be right.



Bowie in London, 1966



ROCK'N'ROLL WITH ME #1

“He employed people to help him make perfection”

HERBIE FLOWERS (bass guitar: 1968, 1974)

“WHEN WE TRAVELLED around America in 1974 on the long, long *Diamond Dogs* tour, I sometimes managed to wangle my way to travel with David in his limo, because I wouldn't fly in those days and nor would David. It was a great privilege for me, sat in the back with him, hardly saying two words – because singers on tour don't want to talk all day, they want to rest. It was comfortable looking out of the window at cactus plants, mountains, this, that and the other. We kind of got to know each other pretty well.

“We did Madison Square Garden. In the afternoon Sly Stone got married, Doris Day had been invited to play the organ, and she sang ‘Que Sera, Sera’, as she'd had a hit with it and so had Sly & The Family Stone. And then, straight after the wedding, in rolled the *Diamond Dogs* lot, and it was completely, beautifully absurd. People of all nationalities, all styles, like a huge beehive. I felt very proud, very safe, I couldn't believe my luck.

“I knew David from doing BBC sessions in the late '60s, and right from the start I knew he was onto something. There was a handful of musicians who were kind of jazzers. David was a bit amused, and bemused, by the startling things we were coming up with. Not just me, but Rick Wakeman with his little Stylophone on ‘Space Oddity’, Mike Garson with his groove for Latin music; it wasn't ‘pop’ music.

“We worked fast and when we did a recording, there might have only been David with his acoustic guitar, and a rough, screwed-up piece of

paper with lyrics on, and a drummer and a bass player. We'd put down the rough track, then go home. But David would go onto step two, and get the right musical director to overscore strings, or get the great Ronnie Ross, who was actually David's sax teacher, to come in and play the sax solo at the end of ‘Walk On The Wild Side’.

“David believed in costume and theatre, choreography, set design, lyrics, the right producer and engineer. He could do everything. He studied everything, and used people – well, he didn't use them, he employed people – to help him make perfection. David was always one step ahead of everyone else. And he was the sweetest man.

“The last time I saw David for a few hours was on the last episode of Marc Bolan's mini-series that he did in Manchester, *Marc*. They did a little duet, but they ran the end titles over it, because Marc slipped and fell off the stage and broke his ankle. The series finished with David looking at him, smiling. I've got a photograph of David and Marc, and myself in the background, and it's the only photograph that I've got that I treasure.

“Sixty-nine is no age. I'm nearly 80, and when I think of, probably, another dozen albums and projects that David might have presented to the world – it's a great loss. It hardly seems fair.”

INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BONNER



Bowie with Bolan and Herbie Flowers (rear) on the TV show, *Marc*, in 1977



With producer Tony Visconti at Trident Studios, St Anne's Court, Soho, May 1970

☛ reported the headline that chilled the blood. This time Bowie would not be coming back from the dead.

Time, of course, was running out in his songs at least 40 years before his fatal diagnosis. Aged only 25, he gave the earth just five years to survive in *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars*. Six months earlier (“Changes”), he'd warned the insouciant exemplars of teenage virility (“Look out, you rock'n'rollers”) that the ageing process would begin sooner than they expected. As early as his fourth single – “Can't Help Thinking About Me” with The Lower Third in 1966 – a 19-year-old Bowie longed to escape his new responsibilities as a home-leaver and go back in time (“I wish I was a child again/I wish I felt secure again.”) In 1971, in “Kooks”, he counselled his son Zowie, newly born and in his crib, to blow his trumpet and face down his bullies while he still had the power of innocence in his lungs. “Soon you'll grow...”

“Kooks”, that charming song from *Hunky Dory*, was played again and again on January 10 as tributes to Bowie poured in. It was in many



ways the perfect choice of song to bid farewell to him. “Heroes”, without question, was the one guaranteed to bring tears to the eyes, and anything from *Low*, *Lodger* or *Station To Station* made the fans of 1976-'79 pause in silent appreciation of his dark, cerebral muse. Others found comfort in “Space Oddity”, much in the news recently, which had a line that the *Daily Mirror* and *Metro* would use on their front pages (“The stars look very different today”). But “Kooks”, the longer that sad day lasted, seemed to tie together the emotions of the present and the complicated strands of the past. It was a Twitter announcement at 6.54am. by Zowie himself – nowadays better known as the film director Duncan Jones – that confirmed the truth of



With wife Angie and three-week-old son Zowie, June 29, 1971



ROCK'N'ROLL WITH ME #2

“He got down on one knee in front of me”

KEN SCOTT (engineer/producer: 1969–1973)

“DAVID HAD COME in and recorded ‘Space Oddity’ with Gus Dudgeon producing and then, of course, the label wanted an LP, so between myself and one of the other engineers at Trident, Malcolm Toft, we recorded the album. I recall thinking how much of a nice guy David was, and what a good singer he was. But at that point I never considered him a superstar in any shape or form.

“Tony, David and the guys cut *The Man Who Sold The World* in another studio, then came to Trident and I did overdubs and mixed it, and once again it was the same feeling. But then, after he took a break for some time, because of the lack of success, he came back into Trident to try to produce a friend of his, Freddie Burretti, and I’d reached the point where I wanted to move into production. During one of the breaks I mentioned that to David, and he said how he’d just signed a new management deal, and they wanted him to record

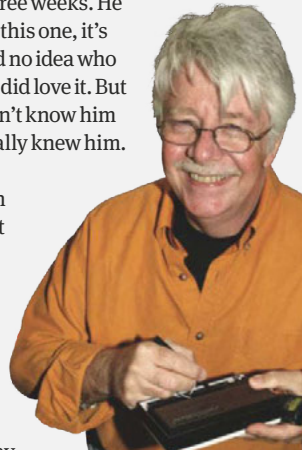
an album. He was going to produce it but didn’t know if he was capable of doing it; would I co-produce it with him?

“So this scenario of working with David, who would never be a superstar... I could actually make mistakes and not worry about people hearing them! Then he and Angie and his publisher Bob Grace came round the house, so that we could start going through material. And, as David was playing demos, suddenly it was obvious that, when he was in charge of his own music, it was a whole different ball game. Once he realised his ideas were good, then he just kept on building from there. His charisma grew.

“David got bored in the studio very easily. And so with the Spiders, they had to get everything fast, which gave an energy. They were nervous as hell they wouldn’t get a track in time, as David would just say ‘Nah, enough, we’re moving on.’ Of the four albums I did with him, he was there for only two mixes. As soon as he’d finished what he had to do, he was onto the next thing. The leap between *Hunky Dory* and *Ziggy* was three weeks. He

said, ‘I don’t think you’re going to like this one, it’s much more Velvet Underground.’ I had no idea who the Velvets were, but he was wrong – I did love it. But he didn’t know me very well, and I didn’t know him very well. I don’t think anyone ever really knew him.

“We’d email from time to time, very infrequently. But I feel like I’ve been in contact with him every single day. Just after *Aladdin Sane*, we were going to dinner one night, and I was over at his place, and before we left he got down on one knee in front of me and presented me with this gold bracelet. On the clasp it’s etched KS/DB, with the lightning bolt from his face. I’ve worn that every single day since.” INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BONNER



Ken Scott with a Stylophone as used on David Bowie’s “Life On Mars?” and “Space Oddity”

a statement made at 6.30 by David Bowie Official. Yes. There was no mistake. His father was dead. Jones, 44, illustrated his tweet with a photo of him as a baby, bouncing on his dad’s shoulders.

The baby had been born on a Sunday morning near the end of May 1971, four days before Bowie recorded a Radio 1 *In Concert* at the BBC’s Paris Studio in Lower Regent Street. He wrote “Kooks” and debuted it for the Radio 1 audience on a 12-string guitar. Soon you’ll grow. If you stay with us, you’re gonna be pretty kooky too. Some Bowie fans, listening to his voice from 1971 and trying to keep up with their social media timelines, would have experienced a disorientating torrent of jump-cuts and flashbacks worthy of *The Man Who Fell To Earth*. Here was a tweeted picture of Bowie in voluminous slacks and a silk or chiffon blouse, pushing Zowie around the streets of Beckenham in a pram with Angie. Here was the Archbishop Of Canterbury no less, in the present day, telling Radio 4 listeners: “I remember sitting listening to his songs endlessly in the ‘70s and always really relishing what he was, what he did, the impact he had.” Here were valedictions from Brian Eno, Iggy

Pop, Madonna, Kanye West, Pharrell Williams, Michael Eavis, Gene Simmons, Kasabian, Frances Bean Cobain and the Vatican’s chief spokesman on cultural affairs. Here was a clever video by an artist named Helen Green that showed a half-century’s worth of Bowie’s image changes flashing past in three seconds. Here was BBC Radio 6 Music, throwing open its airwaves like a drop-in support centre to any distraught fan with a memory or a story to tell. Here was the European Space Agency astronaut Tim Peake, sitting in his tin can far above the world. Here, with ghastly timing, was Angie in the *Celebrity Big Brother* house, one of the few people in Britain not to have awoken to the news that her ex-husband had died. Here was Tony Visconti, sworn to secrecy during *Blackstar*’s recording but now able to talk more freely, saluting the friend he’d known since the summer of 1967: “He always did what he wanted to do. And he wanted to do it his way ➔



ROCK'N'ROLL WITH ME #3

“We went through many highs and lows together”

CARLOS ALOMAR (guitar: 1974-2003)

“I FIRST MET David at the RCA Studio when I was a session musician and he was a producer for Lulu. My first impression? His oddity! At that time, I had an afro, I was heavily into James Brown’s ‘Say It Loud – I’m Black And I’m Proud’, I was on the Chitlin’ Circuit, doing the whole R&B thing with the Sound Of Philadelphia. David was still in his Spiders From Mars period – he had orange hair and his complexion was pasty white. He’d use phrases like, ‘Hey, man’ and ‘That’s cool’, all these little things said in his strange British accent. But when I started talking to him, I could see his humanity. He was this guy from London who was trying to act cool and hip and didn’t know anything about the underbelly of New York City and the scene. We got on really well in the studio, so I invited him to come to my house in Queens. The next thing I know, the limousine rolls up and there he is. So we started going to the Apollo Theatre and hanging out, long before I got the phone call for *Young Americans* saying, ‘Look, you’ve gotta come and do this record with me.’”

“Myself, Dennis Davis and George Murray – how do I say it? – we redesigned David Bowie’s rhythm session. David was kinda funky for a while there! After *Young Americans*, I was shocked when I was called back for *Station To Station*. When I got called back for *Low*, for “*Heroes*”, for all of those records, I’ve always been shocked. I never took my relationship with David for granted. Even all the way up to *Heathen*, when he called me up and said,

‘Hey, I need that Carlos Alomar flavour.’”

“How did we work together? Sometimes we had to pluck some music right from thin air. Other times he’d come to me with a few ideas he might bang out on the piano or strum on the guitar, or that he’s singing free into the room. Other times he didn’t have a clue and I’d say, ‘I’ve got these ideas, what do you think of these?’ He’d say, ‘OK, let’s work on that.’ When I was up there performing with him, I was having the time of my life. He’d turn around and look at me. I’d look at him, we’d smile, and man, consider yourself paid. That’s all you need.”

“David and I went through many highs and lows together, the gamut of all human emotions. I remember when John Lennon died. David wanted to get numb. He said, ‘Carlos, get me something.’ I said, ‘Sure, give me some money.’ So he gave me all his money, and then I went to sleep. Why? I wanted to make sure I took all the money he had in his pocket so that he couldn’t get anything, that he don’t get numb, that he felt the pain of loss. In a family, you go through it all – even the sorrow of loss – and the first thing that happens is numbness. That’s the way the world is right now, it’s just a little numb.”

INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BONNER

and he wanted to do it the best way. His death was no different from his life – a work of Art.”

At first, Visconti’s conclusion seemed glib, banal, even indecently worded in the circumstances. But perhaps it wasn’t banal at all. Perhaps it wasn’t even an exaggeration. Perhaps it was exactly what had transpired in Bowie’s final hours. Having had his best album reviews since *Scary Monsters*, the great conceptualist had followed with a



critically acclaimed death. His final act had been an immaculate performance of the final act.

And somewhere in the middle of the tweets, the timelines, the tributes and the tears, a Wikipedia editor quietly changed “is” to “was”, and Bowie’s 69-year life crossed over into the past tense.

IT WAS CLEAR, even before an official message was sent at 10.41 am by the German Foreign Office thanking Bowie for helping to bring down the Berlin Wall, that he’d had a staggering effect on the world around him. Or on several worlds, actually, as he was soon revealed to have been a pioneer in the spheres of music, art, fashion, theatre, film, sexual attitudes, family values and developments in business and technology. Depending on which tendril of his extraordinary, pan-global influence one wished to focus on, it was possible to disregard Bowie’s

music career completely and hail him instead as an art-world prankster (he and author William Boyd hoaxed critics in the late ’90s with a fake biography of a non-existent artist); or as a trailblazer of the information superhighway (in ’98 he launched an internet service provider, BowieNet, interacting online with his fans at a time when most of his contemporaries dismissed the internet as a passing gimmick); or as a financial innovator, who, to widespread amazement in 1997, generated \$55 million in cash by selling asset-backed securities to investors for a share in his future royalties.

Just as Philip Glass’ *New York Times* obituary of George Harrison ignored The Beatles and concentrated solely on George’s passion for Indian music, assessments of Bowie’s legacy came from every corner of the culture, every place where a culture prevailed, and when you added up his significance to all of them, he seemed to have had a number of simultaneous lifetimes, much as Aleister Crowley was not just an occultist but also a painter, a poet, a mountaineer, an inventor of a religion and a spy. While one messageboard was describing Bowie in broad terms as the most important man in history, another, more specifically, recalled his influence on the fashion tastes of football casuals in the early ’80s. In each encomium his fearlessness was a common theme. His uncanny ability to see into the future – and then promptly shape it – was another.

His January 1972 interview with *Melody Maker*’s Michael Watts, in which he laid the foundations for a new kind of rock star by announcing that he was gay, is remembered as an explosive and far-reaching encounter. But almost as intriguing is a comment Bowie makes to Watts about *Ziggy Stardust*, the album he’s just been recording. Looking ahead to its release, he sounds more than capable of willing the future into being. “I’m going to be huge,” he says, “and it’s quite frightening in a way, because I know that when I reach my peak and it’s time for me to be brought down, it will be with a bump.” The thing to bear in mind is that Bowie, in January 1972, had no data or documentation to back up his blasé predictions. Commercially speaking, he



Live at
Earls Court,
London, 1973

David Bowie | 1947-2016



ROCK'N'ROLL WITH ME #4

“He said, ‘Do you know the Stravinsky Octet?’”

MIKE GARSON (piano: 1973–2004)

“I WAS A jazz musician. I didn’t know who David was when I got a call from Tony DeFries. Can I be in Manhattan to audition at RCA Studios? Bowie’s looking for a pianist. Mick Ronson was at the piano, David was looking at me through the studio glass. Mick gave me the music to ‘Changes’ and said, ‘Can you read this?’ I played no more than seven seconds and Mick said, ‘You’ve got the gig!’

“I only played 10 songs out of about 20 on that first tour, so when I wasn’t playing I snuck out to the audience. David never knew this, but I’d sit in the first row and watch him. After the first show, I knew he was a genius. I was only hired for eight weeks, and I ended up with him for so many years, on and off. I did 18 albums, and God knows how many tours, 10 or 15.

“When we first met, we talked endlessly, for weeks, driving through the States in his limo while he was creating music for *Aladdin Sane*. He played the baritone sax and he loved Stan Kenton. He loved Charles Mingus, too. We talked about all this stuff, and it’s very unusual that a rock musician would know so much about jazz – and a lot of other things besides. One day, he said to me, ‘Can you learn this Vaughan Williams piece and insert it in the intro of one of my songs tomorrow night?’ Or later, when we were recording ‘Battle For Britain (The Letter)’ for *Earthling*, he said, ‘Do you know the Stravinsky Octet? Can you play something like that in your solo?’ I ran downstairs to the record store, listened to the piece again – I hadn’t heard it in 30 years – then I played this crazy solo and he was thrilled. He was very well informed about philosophy, books, music, sculpture – he edited an art magazine, he was good at singing, songwriting, producing... it was endless, y’know?

“He was funny, too. We played Glastonbury in 2000, the closing act after two or three days of all these kids in the rain and mud. We’re about to go onstage. David got nervous and he said, ‘Er, Mike. Go out and play five minutes by yourself, will you? To test the water?’”

“The last time we played together was in 2006 at the Manhattan Centre. It was just me and David. We did ‘Wild Is The Wind’ and ‘Fantastic Voyage’. Alicia Keys came on and sang ‘Changes’. We stayed in touch electronically, though. About three months ago we emailed about Nina Simone. We were laughing ‘cos when we did ‘Wild Is The Wind’ at the Manhattan Centre, he made me listen to her version first. She played great piano. He said, ‘Check this out. Absorb her thing, then add your own.’” **INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BONNER**



Onstage at Ahoy on the Thin White Duke tour, Rotterdam, May 13, 1976

✦ wasn’t even a face on the horizon. His 1970 album *The Man Who Sold The World*, for all its proto-metal guitar riffs and Boschian visions, had sold poorly, and its December 1971 successor, *Hunky Dory*, had been in the shops less than a month when Bowie met the man from the *Maker*. It was all a bit up-in-the-air, a bit pie-in-the-sky. Since “Space Oddity” in 1969, Bowie had been out of the charts for two years. Putting it bluntly, he was a one-hit wonder who’d been forgotten.

Viewed in that context, his appearance on *Top Of The Pops* in July 1972, performing “Starman” (a Top 40 new entry at No 29), wasn’t quite the last-chance saloon, but it was definitely an opportunity to be seized with both hands. As the June 1971 *In Concert* had borne witness, Bowie wasn’t always the most emphatic of frontmen.

However, as about 12 million stunned households watched him cavort and sashay with Mick Ronson, it wasn’t just Bowie’s multi-coloured jumpsuit and spiked hair that made him unrecognisable. With his blue guitar, feline playfulness, pixie-like otherworldliness and provocative mannerisms, he was like no male pop star Britain had ever seen. In one leap he joined Marc Bolan at the forefront of glam-rock. “Starman” would reach the Top 10.

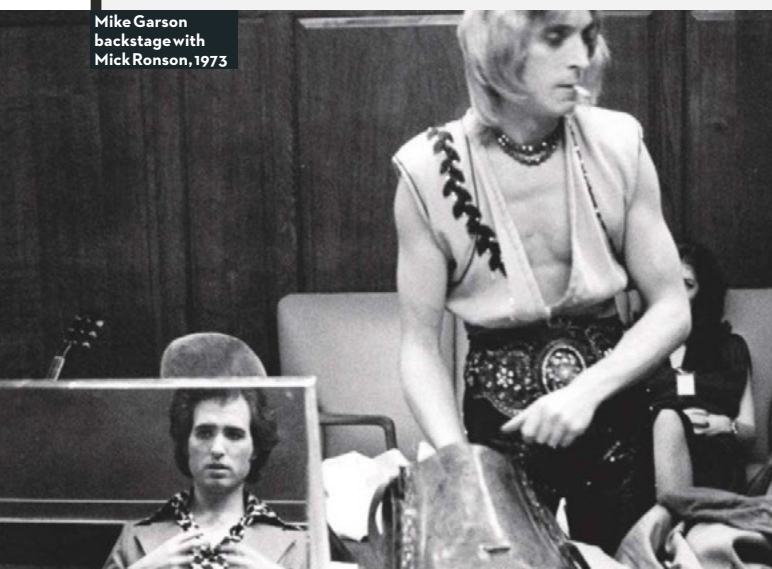
Bowie had waited a long time for those three precious minutes on *Top Of The Pops*. His birth in Brixton and his 1950s childhood as David Robert Jones in suburban

Bromley had been anything but glamorous. He dreamed of liberation, adventure, fun, America, Elvis Presley (with whom he shared a birthday) and Little Richard. His formative musical steps included a flirtation with skiffle and an education in modern jazz from his older half-brother Terry. As the ‘60s got under way, the ambitious Jones, a gyrating enthusiast of blues and R’n’B, attempted to get a foothold as a teenage idol in London. He formed The Konrads, joined The King Bees, dallied with The Manish Boys, flopped with The Lower Third and had no luck with The Buzz. Not even a change of surname made any difference. By the summer of 1967 he’d released one album (*David Bowie*) and nine singles. None had been successful.

BUT THEN HIS life accelerated like a plane on a runway. Once “Starman” brought him to the British public’s attention, *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars* – the second in a spectacular sequence of albums he made for RCA – became a sensation throughout the summer and autumn of 1972. Ziggy, his doomed extraterrestrial rock star, offered Bowie’s young listeners a sexually ambiguous, sartorially outrageous alternative to the peer-pressure superbands like Led Zeppelin, and it wasn’t long before a new breed of suburban outsider in Bowie’s old stomping ground of Bromley, epitomised by the future

JOE STEVENS; GILBERT HANER/KROO/REDFERNS

Mike Garson backstage with Mick Ronson, 1973





STATION TOSTATION DAVID BOWIE



Siouxsie Sioux and Steve Severin, began looking to Ziggy as a saviour and a stimulus. *Aladdin Sane*, his 1973 follow-up, introduced new characters and changed the setting to America, crashing into the album charts at No 1. A week later, Bowie walked onstage at Earls Court in a white kimono and knee-length boots to begin an eight-week UK tour in front of 18,000 fans. It was only a year since he'd played the 1,500-capacity Pavilion in Hemel Hempstead. It was only 15 months since he'd launched Ziggy to the clientele of the Toby Jug, a pub situated on the A3. He was now within touching distance of superstardom. Sections of the Earls Court crowd, angry at being unable to get a clear view of Bowie on the low stage, caused a riot. A photo would later surface of a 16-year-old Sid Vicious, standing outside the venue sporting blue denim and a feather cut. All human life, or very nearly, was at a Bowie concert in 1973.

As he dispensed with the Spiders From Mars and explored new styles and methodologies on *Diamond Dogs* (1974) and *Young Americans* (1975), Bowie tested his fans' mettle

– would they make the transition from glam to soul? and then follow him to who-knows-where? – while establishing his dominance over the '70s and consolidating his status as rock's leading maverick. This was the man whom Madonna, responding to the news on January 10, called a "game changer", an inspiration on her own image-adopting, image-shedding journey through pop. But Bowie changed the game for countless people before Madonna materialised on the scene. The Sid Vicious photo tells a ubiquitous tale of misfit boys and girls who gravitated to the mysterious androgynous Ziggy, and then spent the rest of their teens trusting Bowie as he confronted them with a sudden volte-face, a physical transformation and a new manifestation of his inscrutable unpredictability. Never mind Madonna learning from Bowie how to submit to a full makeover when a new single is scheduled; how about an entire British generation of ➔



Robert Fripp, Eno and Bowie in the studio for "Heroes", Berlin, 1977



ROCK'N'ROLL WITH ME #5

"I realise now he was saying goodbye"

BRIAN ENO (producer: 1976-'79; 1995)

“David's death came as a complete surprise, as did nearly everything else about him. I feel a huge gap now.

“We knew each other for over 40 years, in a friendship that was always tinged by echoes of Pete and Dud. Over the last few years — with him living in New York and me in London — our connection was by email. We signed off with invented names: some of his were Mr Showbiz, Milton Keynes, Rhoda Borrocks and The Duke Of Ear.

“About a year ago we started talking about *Outside* — the last album we worked on together. We both liked that album a lot and felt that it had fallen through the cracks. We talked about revisiting it, taking it somewhere new. I was looking forward to that.

“I received an email from him seven days ago. It was as funny as always, and as surreal, looping through word games and allusions and all the usual stuff we did. It ended with this sentence: 'Thank you for our good times, Brian. They will never rot'. And it was signed 'Dawn'. I realise now he was saying goodbye.”

David Bowie | 1947-2016

post-punks who took their cues from synthesisers, dystopian sci-fi, androgyny and the Berlin Trilogy? From Joy Division to Gary Numan, from Duran Duran to Culture Club, Bowie's influence on the late '70s and early '80s was inescapable and unquantifiable.

The Berlin Trilogy, which he fondly alluded to in email he sent to Brian Eno just after Christmas, was the next logical step – or at any rate Bowie and Eno deemed it a logical step – after the lush soul balladry of *Young Americans* and the psychically frazzled cabalistic conceits of *Station To Station*. The

“DAVID WANTED MUSIC THAT WAS CUTTING EDGE, THAT MADE PEOPLE FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE”
NILE RODGERS

latter project had been a hellish ordeal for the cocaine-addicted Bowie, who donned the chillingly aristocratic mantle of the Thin White Duke for the duration of the ensuing world tour. He retained only a vague impression of the recording sessions that had produced the album: even the name of the studio had been wiped from his memory. Fearing for his



sanity in 1976, Bowie, increasingly linked with the politics of the far right, decided to leave LA and kill off the Thin White Duke before the Thin White Duke killed him.

The two albums he put out in 1977, *Low* and *Heroes*, were compulsive yet analytical studies in displacement, foreignness, boredom, inertia and gloom. Less than 50 per cent of *Low* had had lyrics written for it; a third of *Heroes*, as did the second side of *Low*, consisted of doom-laden instrumentals. From “Fame” to this in 18 months? Bowie's momentum of radical change was comparable to The Beatles going from “Long Tall Sally” to “Tomorrow Never Knows” in two years. The twist he applied to the Berlin Trilogy was to use his regular New York soul and funk musicians – Carlos Alomar, George Murray, Dennis Davis – and get them to play along with the synthesisers and drones. Certain tracks had a bizarre danceability (“A New Career In A New Town”, “The Secret Life Of Arabia”) even as others barricaded their doors and refused to venture out of their windowless rooms. Bowie on drugs. Bowie mad. Bowie clean from drugs.



ROCK'N'ROLL WITH ME #6

“He whipped out a picture of Little Richard!”

NILE RODGERS (producer/guitarist: 1982-1993)

“I MET HIM at an after-hours club called The Continental in 1982. I walked in with Billy Idol and we spotted David at the same moment. I went directly over to David and started chatting with him because I knew that he lived in the same building as a lot of the players on *Young Americans*, who were all friends that I grew up with – Luther Vandross, Carlos Alomar and his wife. We started chatting about our favourite jazz artists. I grew up in an era where fusion jazz had come into play, and also bebop jazz. David not only liked that, but he also liked Stan Getz and the ‘smoother’ side of jazz.

“We had just one other subsequent meeting; that was it. Next thing I know, he says: ‘Hey, can you come over to Switzerland and work on some songs?’ So I go in to the studio one day and he had written out the basics of a song that wound up being ‘Let’s Dance’. But what he’d written sounded like a folk song to me. I thought that that was bizarre, as I thought he wanted to make a jazz album.

“Then he came to my apartment. He had something behind his back, and he says: ‘Now darling, I want my LP to sound like this!’ He whipped out a picture of Little Richard, in a red suit, getting into a red Cadillac convertible. And he says, ‘You see that? That’s rock’n’roll!’ He didn’t want a record that went – ‘Doo doo doo doo doo doo, good golly me!’ He wanted an evergreen LP that’s R&B-based, ‘cos in those days rock’n’roll was called race music, Little Richard’s music

was race music, it was black music. He wanted music that was on the cutting edge, that made people feel uncomfortable, but compelled then to listen. All of that stuff was in that photo, and I got it.

“I had six flops in a row, so I couldn’t understand why David told me, ‘Nile, I want you do what you do best. I want a hit.’ At that point, I was like The Terminator: I wouldn’t stop until it was a hit. *Let’s Dance* was the fastest LP I’d done in my life. Seventeen days from start to finish, mixed and all.

David called me a few years later and we cut a song for the film *Cool World* [“*Real Cool World*”]. Then we did *Black Tie White Noise*. When we started, it was called The Wedding Album, as he was getting married to Iman. We wrote ‘Black Tie White Noise’ at the end. David explained to me how he and Iman were flying over LA and saw the riots and the city burning.

“I used to call David’s office when Chic were doing a show in the area, to see if David would sing a couple of songs with us. A few years ago, I received an award. I was asked who I’d like to present it, and I said David. He couldn’t, because Iman was getting an award that exact same day in San Francisco. But he did a fabulous film for me. It was so warm and gentlemanly. That was David, all the time.”

INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BONNER



With Nile Rodgers at New York's Savoy Hotel on January 21, 1983

DAUGHTER

—
NOT TO DISAPPEAR

OUT 15TH JANUARY



4AD



ROCK'N'ROLL WITH ME #7

“We spent hours taking turns with a hacksaw”

REEVES GABRELS (guitar/co-producer, 1988-1999)

“DAVID WAS 10 years older than me. I have no siblings, so he was like an older brother. I met him through my ex-wife, who did press for him for a few weeks, backstage on one of the first US shows in 1987. We just started talking. I had gone to Parsons School Of Design and School Of Visual Arts. I never said anything about playing music, and he just assumed I was a fine-arts painter. The first time we hung out, we were in his trailer watching *Fantasy Island*, and we started making up our own dialogue. My point is, we met as humans. After six or seven months, my ex-wife gave David a tape. He called me out of the blue and said, ‘Why the fuck didn’t you tell me?’

“One of the things I enjoyed most was making him laugh. He had a very large chest cavity. You could find him in a movie theatre – he’d whisper and you could hear this low rumble. I remember the funny times, the practical jokes. When we were working on *Outside* in Montreux, Eno would go into this chemist every day to buy a box of 24 condoms, as there was a very attractive woman behind the counter and he wanted to see what would happen. Every day, we’d hear about it. Eventually, David got an actor friend of the studio assistant to burst in and claim he was the woman’s boyfriend. Brian told this guy he was a keyboard player and had to put condoms on his fingers because he played so hard they kept them from getting bruised and bleeding.

“Another time, we were working on backing vocals. We were trying

to come up with a particular sound. David looked at the water cooler bottle and said, ‘What if we cut the bottom out of one, put it over my head and put a mic in the hole?’ So we spent what felt like two hours taking turns with a hacksaw cutting the bottom out. It fit over his head and shoulders, we put a mic through the top and he tried singing backing. It sounded like shit! But I learned the clock wasn’t to be looked at in the studio and that what it took to get the song, or the work for the day, to appear could mean sitting around smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee, reading *The Times*. ‘Did you ever notice how capers are really funny-looking?’ This could go on until one of us would pick up a guitar and David would go, ‘Hey! Do that again...’ That way of working, it’s almost like the old café society. More often than not, the studio felt like a lounge with a bunch of gear in it.

“We’d email back and forth. The last heavy exchange was after he had his bypass surgery. He swore me to secrecy about having chest pains. This was in ’98. I’d tried to get him to go to the doctor. So we had a bit of ‘I told you so...’ One of the emails he sent was, ‘I don’t get to my computer much, but they let me have crayons here.’

“It’s very easy to put David on this pedestal, to turn him into an icon. But it’s important to remember what a regular guy, what a lad, what a human, David could be.” **INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BONNER**



Tin Machine, 1989: Bowie (left), Reeves Gabrels (far right)



On the ‘*Serious Moonlight*’ tour, at Wembley Arena on June 2, 1985



➤ Bowie experimenting. Fascinating to behold, Bowie in the ’70s was a one-man genre, an artist unafraid to forge new ground by throwing away the maps and smashing the compass to pieces. But there were signs that his emulators alarmed him: he had Gary Numan, his robotic soundalike, thrown out of the building when he snuck into a recording of *The Kenny Everett Video Show* in 1979. “There’s Old Wave, there’s New Wave and there’s David Bowie,” the adverts for “*Heroes*” had clarified, preemptively disentangling him from

any movement that would co-opt him. But Numan had a hotline to a growing audience hungry for the new sounds of synth-pop. It would be “*Are ‘Friends’ Electric?*”, not “*Boys Keep Swinging*”, that spent four weeks at No 1 in the summer.

The following year of 1980, in what might be seen as a display of self-affirmation, Bowie led a quartet of scenesters from Covent Garden’s Blitz club in a slow march along an eerie-looking Sussex beach, an enormous bulldozer following ominously behind them. The “*Ashes To Ashes*” video cost an unprecedented £250,000 – soon all pop stars would insist on spending that amount – and it propelled the quirky, magical, self-referencing song to the top of the charts in August. A point had been proved. There were Old Romantics, there were New Romantics and there was David Bowie.

IMMEDIATELY ALERT TO the potential of MTV, Bowie was festooned with platinum discs for *Let’s Dance* in 1983 and mingled with the stadium-rock set. He later suggested that he’d made a misguided attempt to chase after Phil Collins’ audience when he ought really to have stuck with his own. *Tonight* (1984) and *Never Let Me Down* (1987) were terribly ordinary, even to a Collins fan, and were unfavourably received by the critics, a surprising turn of events for a now 40-year-old Bowie unaccustomed to laying himself open to rebuke. Several times that decade, small but nadresque occurrences threatened to extinguish in a moment the

IN 1976, BOWIE, DECIDED TO LEAVE LA AND KILL OFF THE THIN WHITE DUKE BEFORE THE THIN WHITE DUKE KILLED HIM

EYEWITNESS

“Don’t you EVER say that to me!”

APRIL 1979: ALLAN JONES IS SUCKED INTO A NASTY TIFF BETWEEN DAVID BOWIE AND LOU REED...

LOU REED’S JUST played a famously cantankerous show at the Hammersmith Odeon, half the audience walking out when he announces he’s not going to play “Heroin”, which he does as soon as they’re off the premises, the set ending with a 45-minute version of “You Keep Me Hangin’ On”, sung by his bass player and played at excruciating volume.

My ears are still ringing on the way out, when I get word that Lou wants to see me backstage for a drink. When I get there, Lou’s already split with Bowie, for dinner at the Chelsea Rendezvous in South Kensington. Lou’s left an invitation for me to join them there. Dinner with Lou and The Thin White Duke? I’m off to South Ken like a shot.

This is what I find at the Rendezvous: Lou and David in a huddle at the head of their table. Lou’s got his arm around David’s shoulder. David is smiling. Lou’s laughing, slapping the table. I’m called over by Lou. Bowie looks up at me.

“Allan,” he says, extending a hand.

“David,” I say, taking it.

“Nice to see you,” says David. “How are you?”

His charm is overwhelming.

“ALLAN!” roars Lou.

“Lou,” I reply, less raucously. Lou grabs my hand, nearly breaking my finger. He yanks me across the table. I almost end up in Bowie’s lap. I have an elbow in the remains of Lou’s dinner.

“Do you know Allan?” Lou asks Bowie.

“We meet occasionally,” he tells Lou.

“Did you see the show tonight?” Lou asks me. I tell him I’m still recovering, which makes him laugh. “Good,” he says. “What did you think?”

“I felt like I was being given a pistol-whipping.”

“You probably deserved it,” Lou snaps.

I decide to leave them to their supper.

“Yeah,” says Lou. “Go.”

I go. Lou turns back to David. They get their heads down, the old pals’ act well under way. Lou gets up and waddles down the restaurant to talk to some people at a nearby table. He grabs a chair for Bowie, who’s followed him. There’s a great deal of mutual backslapping, good times remembered. Lou orders Irish coffee. Lou and David raise their glasses in a toast. “To friends.”

It’s a touching scene. They resume their original places, resume their conversation. Five minutes on, the place is in uproar. Bowie’s said something to Lou. Lou isn’t amused. He fetches David a smart crack about the head. Fists are flying. Most

of them are Lou’s and they’re being aimed at Bowie. David ducks, tries to protect himself.

Lou is on his feet, screaming furiously at Bowie, still lashing out. “Don’t you EVER say that to me!” he bellows hysterically. “Don’t you EVER fucken say that to me!” About nine people pile on Lou, wrestle him away from Bowie. There’s an arm around his throat. He continues to spit insults at Bowie, who sits at the table staring impassively, clearly hoping Lou will go away, fuck off and calm down. Lou shrugs off his minders (or are they Bowie’s?). There’s a terrible silence. People are watching, open-mouthed. Lou sits down next to Bowie. They embrace. There’s a huge sigh of relief.

“THE NEXT THING I KNOW, LOU IS DRAGGING BOWIE ACROSS THE TABLE BY HIS SHIRT AND SMACKING HIM IN THE FACE...”

Lou and David kiss and make up. Meals are resumed, more wine is brought. It looks as if the tiff has blown over. The next thing I know, Lou is dragging Bowie across the table by his shirt and smacking him in the face. The place explodes in chaos again. Whatever David had said to precipitate the first frank exchange of conflicting opinions, he’s obviously rather foolishly repeated. “I told you NEVER to say that,” Lou screeches, batting David about the top of his head. David cowers. Lou gets in a few more solid punches before he’s hauled off the whimpering Bowie. Lou struggles with minders, tries again to launch himself at Bowie.

The silence that follows is ghastly. Lou’s party decide it’s time to leave. Lou is escorted out by an especially burly minder, who frogmarches him to the exit, a restraining arm around his shoulders. Lou’s face is set in a demented scowl. He doesn’t look back. Bowie’s left at the head of the table,

which is covered in debris. He’s sitting with his head in his hands and appears to be sobbing. I wander over. Bowie asks me to join him.

“There isn’t a chair,” I tell him.

“Then sit on the table,” he replies, a little testily. I sit on the table, tell him I’m sorry his reunion with Lou seems to have ended so disastrously. “I couldn’t quite hear what was going on... Lou seemed very upset...”

“Yes,” says Bowie, wearily, close to tears.

“It was nothing. It’s all over,” says Bowie’s female companion, looking at me suspiciously. “It isn’t,” says Bowie, eyes glaring.

“Are you a reporter?” someone asks.

I admit I am and I’m told to leave.

“David’s just invited me to sit down,” I protest. “I was just wondering what happened.”

This does it. Bowie leaps to his feet. “FUCK OFF!” he shouts. He means me. “If you want to know what happened, you’ll have to ask fucking Lou. He knows what fucking happened.”

“But he’s gone,” I tell Bowie.

Bowie, angry now and showing it, turns on me, grabs me by the lapels and starts shaking me. I think for a moment of headbutting him, but don’t.

“Just FUCK OFF!” Bowie swears, shoving me back. “You’re a journalist – go and fucking find him. Ask him what happened. I don’t know.”

He pushes me again, turns away, knocking over a chair. I’m grabbed from behind and dragged back to my table. Bowie sits down. Then he stands up. He starts throwing the furniture around. “Ahhhhh, FUCK!” he declares.

He pushes his way through the restaurant, kicking chairs out of his way. He begins to climb the stairs to the street. Most of the steps on the staircase are decorated with potted plants. Bowie smashes most of them on his way out. He kicks a few, up-ends the others.

There’s a terrible mess. The remaining guests are speechless at this further outburst. The waiters look on, astonished. We share their amazement, my companion and I.

“I think you’ve just upset The Thin White Duke,” she says.

“I think perhaps I have,” I reply.



David Bowie | 1947-2016

EYEWITNESS

“It may all be flotsam and jetsam...”

For *UNCUT*'s October 1999 issue, Chris Roberts travelled to New York to interview Bowie around the *'Hours...*' album. In this apt extract from the interview, Bowie muses on his own legacy. “I’m not so sure what I consider to be achievement any more,” he told us.

BOWIE DOESN'T THINK he'll ever write an autobiography. Doesn't feel the compulsion, and dislikes most books about him. Will people remember you in 20, 30 years' time? By which I mean: will they remember rock stars, pop music? “I don't think people take much time to look back these days,” comes his answer, which might be poignant were it not for his unflinching modernism. “They don't look back anywhere near as much as we used to, as I used to. History has receded into the distance, and so has the future. There is a present sensibility now. The past, the idea of history, has lost a lot of currency. It doesn't carry the weight it had for my generation. So I'm not sure whether last week's papers will mean a light...”

Isn't that sad in a way? For people's forgotten achievements? Say, yours? (“They can bury it under dust,” he once told me of his oeuvre, smiling contentedly.) “See, that's the thing,” he reiterates now. “I'm not so sure what I consider to be achievement any more. Your personal day-to-day existence is the achievement, I think. I'm kind of getting into all that corny stuff, y'know?”

“I don't know what the real worth is of achievement in terms of ‘world opinion’. It's a conjecture, it's, again, a consensus of opinion of a large amount of people. Which has no real worth at all. It may all be flotsam and jetsam.”

One recalls a younger, less at-peace-with-his-life Bowie, who was reported, during a 1976 drunken Berlin row with Coco [Schwab; his long-term personal assistant], to have yelled, before storming off in tears: “Fuck you! I changed the world! Kiss my arse!”



Bowie in 1999: “I suspect that dreams are an integral part of our existence”

Ah, full of contradictions that man. Because they recur on the new album, and because they're what he does for a living, and because if you let them loose they're hard to swallow, he talks about dreams.

“Being imbued with a vividly active imagination, still, I have brilliantly Technicolor dreams. They're very, very strong. The

‘what if?’ approach to life has always been such a part of my personal mythology, and it's always been easy for me to fantasise a parallel existence with whatever's going on. I suspect that dreams are an integral part of existence, with far more use for us than we've made of them, really. I'm quite Jungian about that. The dream state is a strong, active, potent force in our lives.

“The fine line between the dream state and reality is at times, for me, quite grey. Combining the two, the place where the two worlds come together, has been important in some of the things I've written, yes.

“That other life, that doppelgänger life, is actually a dark thing for me. I don't find a sense of freedom in dreams; they're not an escape mechanism. In there, I'm usually, ‘Oh, I gotta get outta this place!’ The darker place. So that's why I much, much prefer to stay awake.”

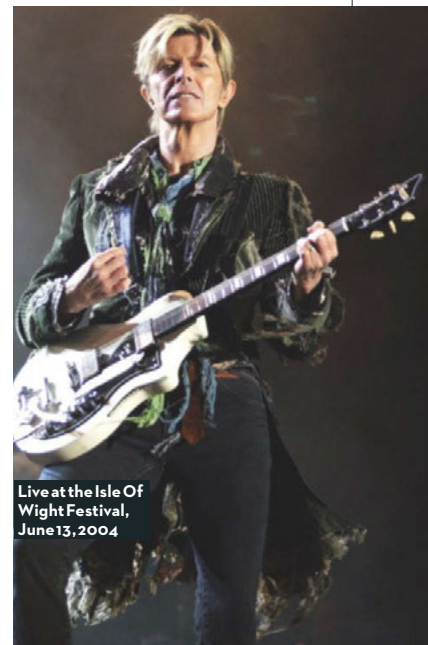
With that, the man who changed the world, formulated escape and blew scales from the eyes and ears of more than one generation goes off, with a devilish grin, to do a thousand things and more.

“I like reality a lot!” he says. “I'm hungry for it.”

➡ mystique that had taken years to create. *Jazzin' For Blue Jean* (1984), a 20-minute film directed by Julien Temple, had a scene of heart-sinking slapstick in which Bowie slid down a ladder like Robin Askwith in *Confessions Of A Window Cleaner*. From *Lodger* to this? Couldn't we reverse the clocks?

Worse criticism was to come when Tin Machine, a rather uncharismatic hard-rock four-piece, inspired widespread scorn. Elements of the media now giggled openly at Bowie, wanting to know if he planned to play “The Laughing Gnome”, an embarrassing comedy song from his distant past, on his upcoming 1990 “Sound + Vision Tour”. And then a puzzling episode happened in April 1992 when Bowie, appearing at the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert at Wembley, dropped to his knees and recited the Lord's Prayer in front of 72,000 people. An unimpressed Brian May, who hadn't been warned of Bowie's intentions, was left wondering what the hell he was playing at. He wasn't the only one. “There's an aspect of my personality,” Bowie was later heard to say, “which continually asks my audience: ‘How long will you tolerate this?’” At least he could be sure that Gary Numan, Boy George, Steve Strange and the Blitz Kids wouldn't emulate him this time.

Happily, Bowie's artistic renaissance lay just around the corner. It was there in vivid glimpses on his 1993 album *Black Tie White Noise*, and it began in earnest with the release, later that same year, of *The Buddha Of Suburbia*, a companion album to a BBC2 dramatisation of the Hanif Kureishi novel. Rediscovering his old touch, an intrepid Bowie



Live at the Isle Of Wight Festival, June 13, 2004

employed risk, chance and other experimental working methods as if the '80s had been a dream. A sadly overlooked album in his catalogue, *The Buddha Of Suburbia* was reminiscent in places of the sombre landscapes and ghostly atmospheres of *Low* and "*Heroes*". There was no misreading the implications. The Bowie of the Berlin period had not expired as feared.

Later in the '90s, appearing fully re-engaged and keen to make up for lost time, Bowie collaborated with Eno (*Outside*, 1995) on their first project since *Lodger*; immersed himself in drum'n'bass and industrial music (*Earthling*, 1997); and saw out the millennium with some introspective lyrics and luminous ballads (*Hours...*, 1999). Glowing reviews greeted the elegant, galvanised *Heathen* (2002), which reunited Bowie with Tony Visconti after a 22-year break. They worked together again on *Reality* (2003), but the world tour that began in Copenhagen in October – Bowie's aim being to play to more than a million people over a 10-month period – would end prematurely. Already unsettled by an incident in Oslo when he was struck in the eye by a lollipop thrown from the audience, Bowie abandoned the tour in June 2004 after a gig in Scheeßel, Germany. He had suffered chest pains and the diagnosis was a grave one: an acutely blocked coronary artery. It



was time for the 57-year-old Bowie to be serious about his health. There were rumours of heart attacks. He never toured again.

IF BOWIE WAS Lazarus at given points during his life, as one or two have intimated, the most improbable of his resurrections took place on January 8, 2013, when his official website suddenly announced a new album, *The Next Day*, years after the world had got used to the idea of his retirement. In a new era of smartphones and celeb

spottings, his ability to disappear on the New York pavements (and keep secret a two-year recording process) almost defied belief. But again, there were rumours. An advance single, "Where Are We Now?", raised plenty of questions when it reminisced about Potsdamer Platz and old haunts. Bowie gave no interviews. His mystique, once unimpeachable, was now impermeable. It was noticed – for all we had to examine was his face in the video – that he looked a lot older than we remembered.

Publicly, Bowie never regretted the Lord's Prayer at Wembley. It was a sincere gesture, he told

anyone who asked, not a cynical one, and he did it for a friend who was dying of AIDS and in a coma. He may also have done it for Mick Ronson. Sharing a stage that evening with the Spiders From Mars' guitarist for the first time in many years, Bowie could see that Ronson's pancreatic cancer – which had been diagnosed by his doctors as inoperable – was taking a ruinous toll. Ronson, who'd played the platinum-haired foil to Bowie's louche, limp-wristed master of ceremonies in the life-changing "Starman" performance on *Top Of The Pops*, made no further live appearances after that Freddie Mercury tribute at

PLAYING THE WILD MUTATION...

David Bowie's greatest albums, as voted for in our Top 200 chart

IF ANY STATISTICAL evidence of the sheer quality of David Bowie's work is needed, then our 200 Greatest Albums poll in the last issue of *Uncut* [Take 225, February 2016] should provide it. Not only did *Hunky Dory* and *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars* reach No 11 and 12, respectively, in the final list, but in total seven of Bowie's albums were voted into the Top 200. That's more albums in the Top 200 than for any other artist.

A testament to the sheer number of peaks in his work, though, is the fact that six of the 11 Bowie albums that our contributors and staff voted for received over 100 points each, more than any

other solo artist (Dylan, by comparison, only had five 100-point albums in the full list).

Our results also support the argument that the Brixton boy is the most important artist in rock from the '70s onwards. If you collate the votes for each artist, regardless of individual albums, Bowie is third behind The Beatles and Bob Dylan – a pair who, according to our chart (and obviously in regard to the Fabs' lifespan), recorded their greatest work in the '60s (with the sole exception being 1975's *Blood On The Tracks*). Unsurprisingly, 10 of the 11 Bowie LPs voted for in the longlist are from his '70s peak – though the exception, *Scary Monsters*, is often lumped in with his imperial 'long '70s' period. Interestingly, none of our contributors voted for 1983's *Let's Dance*, which still remains Bowie's highest-selling album around the world.

A final fascinating, if slightly academic point – with all of *Hunky Dory* and much of *Ziggy* recorded in 1971, what would have happened if Bowie had condensed the best of those sessions into one record, perhaps even a double album? If you were to add the votes for both albums together, the resulting behemoth would displace The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* at No 1 in our chart. **TOMPINNOCK**



THAT TOP 11 IN FULL

- 1 **Hunky Dory**
- 2 **The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars**
- 3 **Low**
- 4 **Station To Station**
- 5 **Diamond Dogs**
- 6 **"Heroes"**
- 7 **The Man Who Sold The World**
- 8 **Young Americans**
- 9 **Aladdin Sane**
- 10 **Pin Ups**
- 11 **Scary Monsters**

David Bowie | 1947-2016

● Wembley. He died in 1993 at the age of 46.

"In rock music, especially in the performance arena, there is no room for prayer," Bowie once commented. "But I think that so many of the songs people write are prayers. A lot of my songs seem to be prayers for unity within myself. On a personal level, I have an undying belief in God's existence. For me it is unquestionable."

If the video he made for "Lazarus" is any indication, Bowie on his deathbed would have reached up with both hands to feel heaven's embrace. His furious writing at that desk paid off; *Blackstar* was and is a brave work and a sublime epitaph. In a wry piece of social media post-modernism meant to be pored over after his demise, the last person Bowie followed on Twitter was 'God'. ('God' followed him back.) And so up he went. Give me your hands. The final curtain. You were wonderful. He has become, with cruel symmetry, the third man in the "Starman" clip to die of cancer – the Spiders From Mars' bassist Trevor Bolder succumbed to it in 2013 – but he's the first, and will remain the only, to

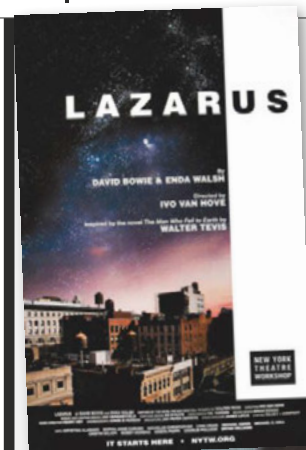
"ON A PERSONAL LEVEL, I HAVE AN UNDYING BELIEF IN GOD'S EXISTENCE. FOR ME IT IS UNQUESTIONABLE"

generate more than 3.5 million tweets in 12 hours as faltering, grieving fans wished him goodnight and God speed in 80 languages. "I'm going to be huge," he drawled in 1972. He didn't know the half of it.

Down here among the damned, meanwhile, we have to get used to not having him around again. Bowie's 'anthems for the alienated', as someone alliteratively called them the other day, have played all day and all night at shrines in London and Berlin, in bedroom shrines, in private. The memories and confessions will always pour out. There was a unity in the prayer of his songs. He made it all right to be an outsider, they say, but look around. Look at the millions of outsiders. No wonder Bowie found it easy to disappear on the pavements of Manhattan. All those Bowies, just like him.

"It feels kind of garish to talk about oneself at a time like this," the singer-songwriter Lorde wrote on her Facebook page, "when the thing that has happened is so distinctly world-sized. But everything I've read or seen since the news has been deeply intrinsic in tone, almost selfish, like therapy." At 19, Lorde may be the right age to talk about Bowie's

CONTINUES ON PAGE 42 ●



Michael C Hall and Sophia Anne Caruso in *Lazarus*

"I've got nothing left to lose..."

THE FINAL ACT OF THOMAS NEWTON... LAZARUS REVIEWED IN NEW YORK

WHEN WE FIRST see Thomas Newton, the space-alien-turned-scientist-billionaire-recluse who's the protagonist of *Lazarus*, he's flat on his back. An open refrigerator to his right is stocked with half-full bottles of gin and not much else. There's a turntable at the front of the stage, behind which are stacked three LPs: *Scary Monsters*, *Aladdin Sane* and *Young Americans*. They function as both a clever nod to the play's author, as well as subtle clues to the play's central themes of madness, violence and vanished youth. And while a huge TV screen behind Newton, portrayed with manic fervor by Michael C Hall, soon snaps him to life, mentally and emotionally Newton spends the play's two hours just as we first found him: completely levelled. It's an opening that feels even darker now after the passing of its author, David Bowie.

Loosely based on both Walter Tevis' 1963 novel *The Man Who Fell To Earth* as well as the 1976 film of the same name, in which Bowie starred, *Lazarus* more or less picks up where those works

ended, with Newton abandoned by girlfriend Mary-Lou, hopelessly stranded on earth and drinking himself daily into a deranged stupor. He's cared for by his housekeeper Elly, who develops an obsessive crush on him, much to the dismay of her husband, and is visited by a young girl named Marley who appears to be either a guardian angel, a manifestation of Newton's tortured psyche, or combination of both.

He's also tormented by a malevolent character named Valentine, who leaves a trail of bloody

corpses in his wake. The play shuns linear narrative in favour of a sort of Lynchian stream-of-consciousness. The characters aren't characters so much as they are manifestations of emotions and ideas, and it's difficult to tell how much of *Lazarus* is happening in the real world and how much in Newton's gin-addled brain. Reworked Bowie songs appear throughout the play, along with four new ones, all of them deepening its themes of death, regret, isolation and the quest for immortality. The results don't quite hang together: *How I Met Your Mother*'s Cristin Milioti, who portrays Elly, isn't

IT'S HARD NOT TO READ NEWTON'S LONGING FOR RELEASE FROM HIS PAINFUL WORLD AS PART OF BOWIE'S "FAREWELL NOTE"

given much to do other than appear in increasing states of both bug-eyed madness and undress, and though Hall veers convincingly from despair to panic, the play's determined surrealism make his performance feel oddly anchorless. Now, though, it's hard not to read Newton's longing for release from his painful world as part of Bowie's "farewell note", a man looking back at his accomplishments before staring into the darkness in search of rest and a way back home.

As in life, what remains in the end is the music, and for the most part, it's stark and well-executed. Opener "Lazarus" comes on like a typhoon, full of wheezing baritone sax and violent, played guitar. It lurches forward solemnly, part zombie trance, part death march, drums thudding, organ twinkling. "Look up here man, I'm in danger," sings Hall, in a dead-on impersonation of Bowie. "I've got nothing left to lose." Like most of the new songs in *Lazarus*, the vocal seems to operate in complete independence of the music – long, languid notes stretched out over jagged, acute instrumentation.

"When I Met You" is sharper and more driving, sounding like an upbeat outtake from *Station To Station*. Posing love as salvation, the song is powered by slashing guitars and thundering percussion. It swings between two poles: on the verses, the guitars are tense and knotty, tightening like barbed wire around a pleading vocal melody; but it all relaxes in the chorus, opening up to a steadily gliding vocal melody befitting the song's hopeful theme.

"Killing A Little Time" is gnarled and furious, the vocal spiralling like an out-of-control plane, saxophones blasting out-of-tune, drums spastic, furious and arrhythmic. "I've got a handful of songs to sing/to sting your soul, to fuck you over," sings Hall, as the bass groans ominously behind him. The line cuts even deeper now, its wild rhythm feeling like the ticking of the clock. The music rattles and quakes, but the vocal piloting its way wildly through the centre. Less successful is "No Plan," sung by Marley. Delivered against wind-chime keyboards and disconcertingly sonorous sax, the song is a

big, dramatic belter better suited to a high school musical.

She's much more effective on "Life On Mars"; presented in a version that's almost a note-for-note replication of the LP version, her voice soars upward to cradle the song's high notes, and the result is deeply moving. The guitars are stripped from "The Man Who Sold The World" and replaced with a racing rhythm track and misty layers of synth, recalling one of the more subdued songs from *Outside*. "All The Young Dudes", delivered during a wedding celebration, is boisterous and booming, and "Absolute

Beginners" gentle and spritely, its arrangement relying on twinkling keys and soft pinpricks of guitar. By contrast, "Always Crashing In The Same Car", sung by Milioti, pounds angrily, becoming a song of internal frustration rather than blank anxiety. The generous helping of songs from *The Next Day* suits the show's mood perfectly. "Love Is Lost" sounds nastier and more serrated than it does on record, guitars clawing their way up the centre and drums walloping away frantically around them. "Dirty Boys", with its bleary sax and ice-cold vocal melody is queasy and unnerving; and "Valentine's Day," delivered by Valentine, covered in blood after a giddy killing spree, has new layers of dread – less a love song, more a threat. Milioti turns "Changes" into a slice of swinging, smoky, supper-club jazz, and a

show-closing take on "Heroes", turned into the piano ballad and sung by Hall and Caruso, is soft and tender, uncovering new layers of vulnerability. The play arrives at a resolution that now feels both deeply sad and strangely uplifting. After a brilliant, soaring life, followed by years in exile, Newton finally finds his peace. He ends the play as he began, on his back. But this time, he's smiling, content, and free.

JEDWARD KEYES

SONGS PERFORMED

Lazarus
When I Met You
Killing A Little Time
It's No Game (Part 1)
This Is Not America
The Man Who Sold The World
Love Is Lost
Changes
Where Are We Now?
No Plan
Absolute Beginners
Dirty Boys
Life On Mars?
All The Young Dudes
Sound And Vision
Always Crashing In The Same Car
Valentine's Day
Heroes



Caruso and the show's band, with Henry Hey on keys



"His beautiful and warm humanity sets the bar for how anyone should live their life"

HENRY HEY (pianist on *The Next Day*; musical director of *Lazarus*)

“WE HAD A lot of dialogue, talking about how the songs should fit in their place within *Lazarus* and how they should feel. There were several meetings where David and I would sit at my apartment and go over the intention of what the song arrangements would become. He was always very articulate about the concept, but very open to new ideas. As we went forward and I was developing arrangements, I'd send demos to him and we would talk about them some more. It was always an open discussion and an enjoyable process. He was always excited for new territory – thrilled with exploration, even in songs that were well-worn paths for him.

"David was quite hands-on about the show. He saw and approved every actor and band member who was presented to him. He cared a lot and it showed. He and I talked about the rehearsal process and we elected to have a week with just the band so we could get the music right. I believe it made a substantial difference. Everyone knows David was a visionary artist. His art transcended genre and medium, and so in working with him on *Lazarus* I had the rare fortune to witness a lot of these incredible cross concepts. However, perhaps the most impressive thing about David was that in spite of international fame and iconic stature, he was the most humble and gentle human. His beautiful and warm humanity sets the bar for how anyone should live their life."



Michael C Hall and Cristin Milioti

David Bowie | 1947-2016

importance in the interior monologues of a fan. "That's who he was to all of us." And he's bound to leave a big hole in the universe. Everybody's universe.

Biographers of Bowie have stressed his reliance on artifice and detachment. He misdirects and dissembles. Don't take him at his word. As with his fiercely guarded privacy, some of his songs came with padlocks attached. Even "Heroes", in which a boy and a girl kiss, had its title placed between inverted commas to cloud its original motives. "Because I have been an elliptical writer," Bowie said in 1994, "I think people have – quite rightly – gotten used to interpreting the lyrics in their own way. I am only the person the greatest number of people believe that I am."

After providing the consummate soundtrack to millions of lives, Bowie is not going to be allowed to get away with a sleight-of-hand exit like that. First you see him, now you don't? No, he was too sympathetic to leave so slyly. Too

affectionate, too ever-present in the conversations we have with ourselves. Whatever layers Bowie needed to hide behind, and however his agile brain may have rationalised life's discourse, his legacy is not some intellectual treatise. The outpouring of emotion tells the real story. No post-modernism or detachment in the sing-songs at the Bowie mural in Brixton. No glacial stares or hollow cheekbones. Though the Thin White Duke would sneer at *Hunky Dory*, you can't help thinking of Bowie in 1971 with his tiny son on his shoulders. Soon you'll grow. That applies to both of them. And then, as Lorde says, we apply it to us. "We are all Bowie's children," read a statement from the Pet Shop Boys, not being arch for once, and when they put it like that, he really was a wise and exhilarating parent. **1**

ROCK'N'ROLL WITH ME #9

"It was like he'd teleported in"

DONNY McCASLIN (band leader, 2015)

“THE LAST TIME we spoke, I was about to hook up with David to listen to *Blackstar* for the first time. It was a wonderful day, and I was walking across Washington Square Park, heading over to his office not far from there. I got there and talked to him on the phone, and he said he was on his way, so his assistant put on the LP and I just sat back and listened, and... oh God, it was so amazing to hear it. A part of that was a testament to David and Tony Visconti and the way they worked to comb through all the details. How they'd put everything together was really special.

"I was trying to take all that in, eyes closed, thinking, 'This is great', and then I opened my eyes and there's David Bowie in the room with a big smile on his face, like he'd teleported in while I was, y'know, having some tears or whatever. Something that was so exciting for me was seeing the joy in his face when he was pleased with a take. That must have been the last time I saw him. He was so vibrant and engaged from the moment he walked in the door, through the whole process, for all the time he put in. That's something I'll take with me for the rest of my life. It sounds like a cliché, but he was living life to the fullest, right? Recording with us during the day, then going to Henry Hey's place and working on *Lazarus*, then at night combing through what we'd cut that day or writing new music. He trusted us, and it meant the world to me. 'Gracious' is the word I come back to a lot when I try to describe him – and very generous. In the studio, and outside, too. I haven't been able to put *Blackstar* on since David passed away. I'm just about ready..."

INTERVIEW: MICHAEL BONNER



With Donny McCaslin, 2015: "He was living life to the fullest"

JIMMY KING



"YOU CAN'T GET ENOUGH..."

AS YOU MIGHT expect, the Bowie frenzy doesn't need to end here. If you didn't manage to pick up our *Ultimate Music Guide* to Bowie last summer, we've made it available again; 148 heavy-duty pages that feature reviews of every album (up to *The Next Day*), plus a glut of revelatory features lifted from the archives of *NME* and *Melody*

Maker. It's in the shops now, but you can also order direct from us, at www.uncut.co.uk/store.

While you're there, we've plenty more Bowie stories for your delectation, including a mammoth countdown of his 30 greatest songs, the complete 1999 interview that we teased on page 38, and Donny McCaslin's in-depth story of the making of *Blackstar*. Please get in touch, too, with your memories of the great man; the address, as ever, is uncut_feedback@timeinc.com

“He always did what he wanted to do. And he wanted to do it his way and he wanted to do it the best way. His death was no different from his life — a work of Art. He made *Blackstar* for us, his parting gift. I knew for a year this was the way it would be. I wasn't, however, prepared for it. He was an extraordinary man, full of love and life. He will always be with us. For now, it is appropriate to cry.”

TONY VISCONTI (friend and collaborator)



ALBUM BY ALBUM

Mavis Staples

The soul singer reflects on her 65-year career: "Hey, I'm just getting started!"

AT THE AGE of 76, and after 65 years of performing, Mavis Staples can hardly believe that she may only just be reaching her peak. "Things have been happening for me lately," she says, "that make me feel like being born all over again. I mean, at this time I should be thinking about retiring, but I'm thinking, 'Hey, I'm just getting started.'"

After success with her family gospel and soul group, The Staple Singers, led by her father Roebuck 'Pops' Staples, and decades of strong solo work, Mavis Staples now feels revitalised by her new record, the M Ward-produced *Live! On A High Note* – including new songs by Nick Cave and Justin Vernon – and a forthcoming documentary about her life, *Mavis!*.

"I tell you, it's a beautiful feeling. So my father is very proud right now. And I know he's probably telling all the angels, 'Yep, my daughter Mavis, she's still at it.'" **TOM PINNOCK**



Family affair: Mavis (left) started out with her father's gospel and soul group The Staple Singers

THE STAPLE SINGERS UNCLOUDY DAY

VEE-JAY, 1959



Following their early church performances, The Staple Singers were picked up by Vee-Jay to record a set of singles, soon compiled on this, their debut LP.

When we first started singing on our living room floor back in 1949, 1950, we weren't doing it for a career, we were singing to amuse ourselves. We'd done all of our homework and had nothing to do, so my father picked up his guitar and said, "We're gonna sing." And he started giving us things to sing that he and his sisters and brothers would sing when they were in Mississippi. And that was The Staple Singers. One night my aunt Katie came through and said, "Shucks, you guys sound pretty good. I believe I want y'all to sing at our church." And when we sang in her church, that was it – people liked us so much that they kept clapping us back. And Pops said, "Shucks, these people like us, we'll have to go and learn some more songs." And the rest is history. When we moved to the studio, it was fine. In church you were singing to a congregation, and you could get this spiritual feel from just being there. But what you do in the studio is you take your heart in there with you. You have to be very sincere. When we first started, man, we would always be on the same mic in the studio. We wouldn't do a whole album, we'd sing four songs, then The Spaniels would sing four, then Maceo Woods would do four. And those 12 songs would make the album. Then when we did our first whole albums, *Unc cloudy Day* and *Will The Circle Be Unbroken*, we sang all the songs!

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



THE STAPLE SINGERS FREEDOM HIGHWAY

EPIC, 1965

The Staples engage thrillingly with the Civil Rights movement on this live album, recorded at Chicago's New Nazareth Church. This was a live album, recorded in church. The title song refers to the [Civil Rights] march from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery, Alabama. And that was when they wouldn't let us cross the bridge into Montgomery. That is all shown now in that movie, [2014's] *Selma*. Pops wrote the lines "march of freedom's highway... I've made up my mind and I won't turn around", and he started putting those verses in there. I still sing "Freedom Highway" today, because it's still relevant. Sometimes I think I'm back in the

1960s, with what is going on today. So I keep freedom songs in my show, because they are still relevant – "Freedom Highway", "Why Am I Treated So Bad"... People used to tell us, "You're very political", and we'd say, "That's our way of getting it across, through a song." Pops would say, "If you write for the Staples, then you gotta read the headlines, 'cos we wanna sing about what's going on in the world. And maybe we can sing a song to try and fix it." That was just our way of letting the world know that we, as black people, we got somebody on our side, too, and you could hear it in a song. "Why Am I Treated So Bad" – Pops wrote that for the Little Rock Nine. There were nine black children trying to go to a school in Little Rock, Arkansas, and they would not let these children board the bus.

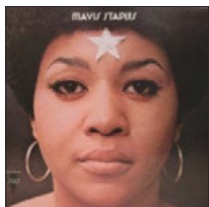
Every day they would walk with their books and their heads held high into a mob of white people throwing rocks at them, spitting at them and calling them names. It went on for so long that the governor of Little Rock, the mayor of Little Rock and the President Of The United States said, "Let those children board that bus. Let them go to school." And we were waiting around the television to see the kids board the bus. When they got ready to go to the bus, a policeman was standing there and he put his club across the door, wouldn't let them board. And Pops said, "Why are they treating them so bad?", and he wrote that song that night. It turned out to be Dr King's favourite. We would sing before Dr King would speak, and he would always wanna hear that song.



Gospel truth: Staples also found success singing solo

MAVIS STAPLES MAVIS STAPLES

STAX/VOLT, 1969



Stepping away from The Staple Singers briefly, Mavis heads to Muscle Shoals to record her solo debut, a set of secular covers.

Making a record on my own was just something that I wanted to do. It felt strange [working without *The Staple Singers*], but I knew that I wasn't going anywhere. I knew I wasn't leaving my family. By this time I had gotten to be a young woman, I had been married and divorced, and I wanted to sing about it. I sang songs like [Bacharach and David's] "A House Is Not A Home" – you know, you wanna sing about what's happening in your life. But I was very nervous about singing those secular songs, because the church people were very quick to jump on you about that. For me, it was amazing – I mean, the gospel radio stations played my songs, they'd play "A House Is Not A Home" on the gospel show. So I was really being blessed! If you hear me sing a secular song, you're gonna hear some gospel in my voice, I can't let it go. Working with Steve Cropper and Al Bell was amazing. Those were really good times – Steve Cropper was just the best. I was crazy about Steve, and we see each other from time to time today. It was Steve Cropper who produced our first Stax albums [1968's *Soul Folk In Action* and 1969's *We'll Get Over*], and then Al Bell took over.

THE STAPLE SINGERS LET'S DO IT AGAIN

CURTOM, 1975



The family team up with Curtis Mayfield to soundtrack Sidney Poitier's 1975 boxing drama, scoring a No. 1 album on the US pop charts.

We were really

blessed to have worked with some amazing people over the years. Curtis Mayfield, he was just unbelievable. Curtis wrote "Let's Do It Again" for us. In the studio, Curtis said, "Pops, this is your part..." and it was [sings] "I like you lady/So fine with your pretty hair." And Pops said, "Curtis, man, I'm not gonna sing that, I'm a church man." And Curtis said, "Oh, Pops, the Lord won't mind..." Me and my sisters wanted to hear our voices on the big screen, so we kept at him and said, "Daddy, it's just a movie score, you're not leaving the church..." And we finally got him to do it. I was glad we did, because *Let's Do It Again*, that record went platinum. Curtis was a funny producer. We miss Curtis. I sang on his last album [1997's *New World Order*] – he calls me and says, "Mavis, I have a song that's got your name written all over it." I said, "What is it, Curtis?" And he said, "It's gonna be on my next album, it's called 'Ms Martha'." So I went on down to Atlanta and I put down "Ms Martha". In the studio, Pops just let it flow, he wouldn't try and take over anything. The only time he would take over is if he heard one of our voices going the wrong way. He would fix that, but otherwise he would leave it to the producers.

MAVIS STAPLES THE VOICE

PAISLEY PARK, 1993



Hooking up with Prince, who wrote and produced *The Voice*, Staples returns to form after a quiet decade – even if the triumph is bittersweet. Prince wrote those

songs especially for me – and at that time I felt that that was the best I had ever heard myself sing, and the best songs that I'd ever heard myself sing. But Prince had been having a fight with Warner Bros and when the record came out, Warner Bros wouldn't let it be played, because Prince was trying to get off their label. It hurt so bad. It was played in Europe, as Prince sold half of it to a company in Europe. People over here [in the US] never heard *The Voice*, very few anyway. When I would go to Europe, though, I would have to sing those songs because they had the album and they would request some of it! But I tell you, that hurt so bad, it hurt Prince and it hurt me, though I was hurting more for him than I was for myself. When we were making it, it was a time I heard him so happy; he was so happy that the record had come out so good. "Blood Is Thicker Than Time", he wrote that as a tribute to my family. When we were recording the song "The Undertaker", Prince asked me, "Do you think Pops will play on this?" and I said, "Sure." He's singing on some of the songs, too. It was just a record made in heaven, you know? Prince and I both couldn't wait for it to hit the stores and hit the radio. But it never did.

MAVIS STAPLES



High notes: Staples' new album includes songs by Nick Cave, Justin Vernon and M Ward

MAVIS STAPLES WE'LL NEVER TURN BACK

ANTI-, 2007



After 2004's strong *Have A Little Faith*, Staples pays tribute to the Civil Rights movement's 'freedom singers', with help from Ry Cooder and Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

Ry Cooder was very, very good on the freedom songs – you would have thought he was in the movement, you know! Oh man, I enjoyed working with Ry so much. I'd go into the studio, and say, "Well, what are we gonna do today, Ry?" And he'd say, "It's up to you, young lady." There are some great songs on this album – "Jesus Is On The Main Line", he really wanted to do that because he had done it before with his jazz group. Those were the original Freedom Singers from the movement, you know? That was a good, good time, it was just so good to see the Freedom Singers again. I asked Ry, "How did you find them?" and he said, "Oh Mavis, I know how to go to Mississippi and find people..." And then he got those artists from Africa, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and they came into the studio. You talk about sounding good – boy, they sounded good! That was a very good session. I enjoyed it so much that when it was time to go back to the hotel I wasn't ready to go, and Ry would say, "Well, we always have tomorrow." And I said, "OK, I'll come back tomorrow!"

MAVIS STAPLES YOU ARE NOT ALONE

ANTI-, 2010



Teaming up with Wilco's Jeff Tweedy on this and 2013 follow-up *One True Vine*, Staples makes some of the most earthy, devastating music of her career.

I really enjoyed working with Jeff Tweedy, 'cos he came with some good songs for me to sing. [Low's] "Holy Ghost", on *One True Vine*, it's like Jeff Tweedy had a magnifying glass and could see straight to my heart. I would watch him with his acoustic guitar and I would hear him play, and I would just know where to go. Those were really fun sessions. On *One True Vine*, Tweedy played most of the instruments, but on *You Are Not Alone* my live band were in the studio. Tweedy's sons asked me to be their grandmother! They said, "Do you and [sister] Yvonne wanna be our grandmas?" I said, "Yeah, I'll be your grandma, that's a new one on me!" I've been asked to be mum, godmum, auntie, but never grandma, so it's about time for me to be somebody's grandma. I said, "I'd love to be your grandma," so they still call me 'grandma' and they're my grandchildren. When they come to my shows, I let the audience know my grandsons are here – Sammy and Spencer!

POPS STAPLES DON'T LOSE THIS

ANTI-/DBPM, 2015

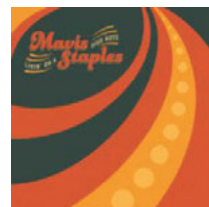


Staples enlists Jeff Tweedy to help bring her father's elegiac last work to the public.

My father recorded this in 1998. One night when he was on his sick bed, he asked me to bring the recordings to his room so he could hear it. This was when my sisters and I were at his side taking care of him. I brought the record up to his room and put it on, and when I thought it was finished I went back to his room and said, "How do you like it, Pops? What do you think?" And he just said, "Don't lose this, Mavis. Don't lose this." I knew what that meant, that he liked it and he wanted other people to hear it. I knew I'd have to wait until I had something going first before I tried to put Pops' record out there. Years later, I was on Anti-Records, and they hooked me up with Jeff Tweedy. I knew Pops' record needed tweaking, so I asked Tweedy and he was glad to do it. When it was done, my sister Yvonne and I went to Jeff Tweedy's studio to hear it – man, I just lost it, my sister and I just held on to each other and cried. It was like Pops was just right there in the studio with us. And Tweedy's wife was there, and she was in tears. Everybody was in tears. It just sounded so good. My heart was pounding so hard. I'm still thanking Jeff Tweedy.

MAVIS STAPLES LIVIN' ON A HIGH NOTE

ANTI-, 2016



With new songs from Nick Cave, Justin Vernon, M Ward and Neko Case written just for her, Staples' latest album is a more upbeat work after the sparse *One True Vine*.

I just feel so special that these great songwriters would take the time out of their busy schedules to write a song for Mavis! The president of Anti-, Andy Kaulkin, knew M Ward and he thought he would be right to produce me. One of my friends told me he's very shy. I told her, that's no problem – "Prince was very shy, but I broke through to him, just leave it to Mavis!" The good thing about this session is that the band that I travel with are playing on all of the songs – my guitarist Rick Holmstrom, drummer Steven Hodges, bass player Jeff Turmes, and my background singers Vicki Randle and Donny Gerrard. So we're all right at home. The songwriters know me, they knew what fit me, so the sessions were a breeze, they took no longer than two weeks. I've been singing a lot of songs that make people cry, so I wanted to make people happy this time. One of the writers, Nick Cave, and his song ["*Jesus Lay Down Beside Me*"], I just love it. Then there's "MLK Song" – I got so wrapped up in that I almost didn't finish it the first time. I choked up and started to cry, as I could see Dr Martin Luther King as I was singing. It just hit me and I almost broke down. But I held it together and I finished, and then I broke down: you have to take your heart into the studio. ☺

Livin' On A High Note is out on Anti- on February 19. The film *Mavis!* will be released in cinemas and on demand the same day



NEW ALBUM
08.01.2016



davidbowie.com



IN A FIELD OF THEIR OWN

Story: Laura Snapes | Photo: Andy Martin

“BEAUTIFUL ... STRANGE,” says Prince, of his unlikely new crush, FIELD MUSIC. “There’s a certain ridiculousness to being in a band,” counters David Brewis, as he and his brother Peter take *Uncut* around their native Sunderland, on a quest to understand the complicated brilliance and ambitious pragmatism of their group. Plus: how to play the Fleetwood Mac counting game!

Raising the roof:
David Brewis (left),
and brother Peter

A

T NEWCASTLE'S SETTLE DOWN Café, Peter Brewis' three-year-old son is explaining the "Fleetwood Mac counting game". It's based around a picture of the *Rumours* lineup, and it's quite advanced – not just based on sight, but the band's inner workings. He can also identify The Beatles, says Peter, before getting him to explain his antipathy to Hall & Oates' "Kiss On My List" – it's the scream that ruins it, as he demonstrates loudly.

After lunch, Peter drives his younger brother and Field Music bandmate David and *Uncut* to the group's native Sunderland. David (35) has always lived there, while Peter (38) studied in Wales and now lives in Newcastle. On this early January afternoon, the coastal city is freezing and sodden, preventing a proper exploration of their haunts – although the brothers are such entrenched locals that the walk from the car park to Louis' Café spans several of them. Just down the road from The Bunker, the youth music project where they became teenage peer mentors, is Hot Rats, the record shop in which they filmed part of the video for their new album's lead single, "The Noisy Days Are Over".

A SUNDERLAND FIXTURE since the 1920s, Louis' is a vast canteen known for its milky coffees. It's on the cover of Field Music's second album, 2007's *Tones Of Town*, and is Peter's preferred place to sit and write lyrics. "Thinking, 'Hmm... What's the world all about?'" he says, tapping his chin.

But for *Commontime*, the band's fifth album, awaiting the muses wasn't an option. David's son is 18 months old, and both brothers have tried to be hands-on dads. "I've had to be a lot more active with my time," says Peter.

As well as dictating the schedule, Peter's son's very specific tastes shaped the sound of *Commontime*. "There was a time when he would only listen to US No 1s in the van," says Peter. "He had some kind of antenna for them. I knew I was going to have to spend a lot of time with him in the van, listening to mixes, and I wonder whether that crept in." To dupe him into accepting them? "Or dupe him into getting us to write a US No 1."

They've mostly passed Brewis Jr's test. Aside from 2010's double album, *Measure*, *Commontime* is Field Music's longest record, but it features 14 of their poppiest songs: vocals upfront, and more boisterous than usual. It often recalls Peter Gabriel from *Scratch* through *Security*, minus the paranoia; meanwhile "Trouble At The Lights" goes very *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* halfway through. "Disappointed" has the amiable clatter of Fine Young Cannibals' "She Drive Me Crazy" (a 1989 US No 1), while "They Want You To Remember" evokes Daryl Hall's *Sacred Songs* – meaning there's plenty of Robert Fripp's DNA there, too.

"Common time" is what classical musicians call 4/4; the title is a joke about perceptions of Field Music as time signature-obsessed proggers. "We've never used them as much, or as consciously, as people think we do," says David. While the music is as tightly spun as

ever, there's a contentment that feels novel for the naturally anxious brothers. *Commontime* has a more conversational lens than its predecessor, 2012's political *Plumb*. There's plenty about new parenthood, along with a desire for balance, and a relief at leaving behind the vicissitudes of

youth. "It's the happiest Field Music album by default," says David.

"Getting to go to the studio three days a week and make music was an unadulterated joy, and a release," says Peter. "There was lots of other family stresses going on – all of the people who I really love the most, in the last three years, have been ill." He points across the Formica table at David. "Except for you. You've had some pretty bad colds, bit of a bad back sometimes, but other than that..." David leans into the tape. "I don't

know whether Peter should hear this, but we were enjoying each other's company, too."

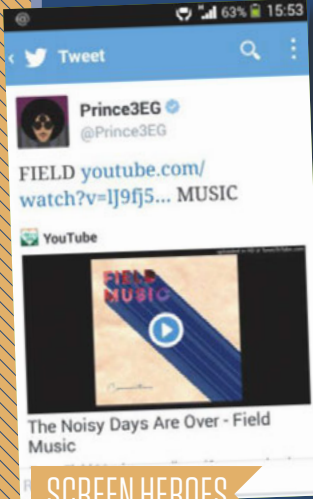
Despite having been performing for over 20 years, both brothers are still embarrassed to sing, even in the studio. Inspired by the whoops that litter the background of Beatles songs, they encouraged each other to fight their impulses against silliness when recording *Commontime*. "That's Close Enough For Now" drew from an *Uncut* interview in which Steve Albini discussed Jimmy Page's reticence to fix his mistakes on 1998's *Walking Into Clarksdale*. "That's what we thought we should do a little bit more of," says Peter. "We've got better at leaving mistakes in."

"We were geeing each other on not to be embarrassed," says David. "We still struggled, though. We are naturally quite reserved."

"There's something about it all being self-produced, I get quite nervous about it," says Peter. "It can get a bit too serious – it's just a rock'n'roll band – so we have to find ways of being less serious. Even the most frivolous of pop music that's out there now seems so serious." ➔

"THIS IS THE
HAPPIEST
FIELD MUSIC
ALBUM BY
DEFAULT"
DAVID BREWIS





SCREEN HEROES

"WAS IT PRINCE?"

Sunderland meets Alphabet tweet

In late November, Prince tweeted the link to Field Music's "The Noisy Days Are Over", accompanied by the words "FIELD ... MUSIC", only to delete it again shortly after. Screenshots were preserved for the ages, and David Brewis returned the favour by writing a piece for *The Guardian* about the duo's favourite Prince songs. Soon after, Prince's Twitter fired up again, with a link to the article sandwiched between the words "BEAUTIFUL ... STRANGE".

"I didn't know what to think," says David. "Was it really Prince? Had he really heard the song? Was it possible that he actually liked it?"

There's been no direct contact with Paisley Park, a state of affairs that the Brewises are happy to preserve. "The fact that Prince has even heard the music means that it's getting out there and having an effect on people," says Peter. "If it's had an effect on Prince, one of the greatest rock performers ever, just for a brief moment, then it feels like we're doing something right. Even back in 2005 I'm sure we had a note pinned on the wall with a sort of half-joke/oblique strategy: 'What Would Prince Do?'"

➔ "Like, 'These photos of our indie band are gonna make us look like heroes!'" trills David.

"And you don't want to make it into a joke," says Peter, "but..." "There's a certain ridiculousness to being in a band," says David.

THE BREWISES HAVE an inherent suspicion of how bands behave – a distaste that almost caused them to quit Field Music altogether. From their self-titled 2005 debut, their lyrics have consistently confronted the use of rhetoric. They've sung about wanting to become more assertive, but mistrusting the ways in which other people wield assertion. "I've gradually become much more comfortable with my own self-doubt, but I still have a lot of it," says David.

Back in the late 1980s, the Brewises started out as confident young musicians. Their childhood love of Stock Aitken & Waterman heralded obsessions with Queen and Led Zeppelin, and a "make-believe" approach to forming their own bands, says Peter.

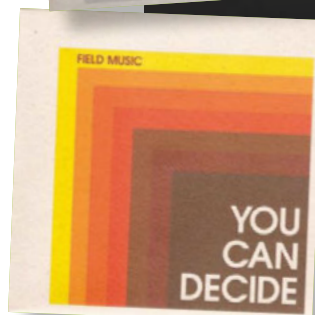
Getting a four-track recorder led them to start writing their own songs, which they slipped into their sets playing classic rock covers in pubs. "We'd do a few gigs a week while I was doing my GCSEs," says David, who sang. "I knacked my voice so much that I thought, I'll never be able to sing falsetto again, but it didn't matter – I'd go into a pub as a 15-year old and have a pint of Guinness, because I was too young to drive, and slay 24 classic rock songs in a night. I mean, it was really classic – we played 'Born To Be Wild'. We *really* played 'Born To Be Wild'."

Two years later, they realised that they had bigger ambitions, piqued in part by Beck's *Odelay*, "the first contemporary album that I heard and thought, I'd like to do that," says Peter. "Serious musically and not very serious in another way." They focused on their work at The Bunker, where they met the nascent Futureheads, including Barry Hyde, whose dad introduced them to bands like The Velvet Underground. "I remember walking into the rehearsal room and seeing this guy with long hair, playing this heavy metal-looking red bass, wearing a pair of flares and a suede jacket, and singing in a Louisiana accent," says Hyde. "That was a 15-year-old Dave Brewis. They showed us how to be musicians. We were a similar age, but because they'd been playing semi-professionally, it seemed possible to get to that level."

Collaboration paused during university, after which they reunited, playing in each other's new bands – and endeavouring to sing in their own accents. By late 2003, David's The New Tellers and Peter's Electronic Eye Machine overlapped so much that it made sense to merge. They chose the name Field Music because it sounded so un-band-like, and recorded what would become their debut album at 8 Studio, the recording space they had co-founded with The Futureheads. Still unsigned, the Brewises met Memphis Industries when they backed former Kenickie drummer Pete Gofton's band J Xavere in London.

"They were doing these incredible harmonies, elevating Pete's songs to another level," says label co-founder Ollie Jacob. "We were taken with them and the way they seemed so out of time. Maybe it was David taking out his pocket watch."

Memphis released *Field Music* in August 2005. But the Brewises' brief burst of optimism at being signed soon faded.



Although they'd been playing live for years, they still had no idea how to tour. Nobody came to their first dates as Field Music, and they lost over £2,000 on five shows because they thought you had to hire a van, a sound engineer and guitar tech. As British indie became laddy post-Arctic Monkeys, they found themselves playing festival bills alongside acts like The Pigeon Detectives, "trying to share an audience

with these bands that we felt we had *nothing* in common with," says David. "We didn't have a great thrift-shop leather jacket. We looked like..."

"That," says Peter, pointing at David: both brothers are wearing dark grey knitwear and striped shirts.

They still had day jobs: Peter was working as a curriculum support officer, and would "get smashed" to cope with the day's stresses. David was training as a quantity surveyor, which he hated. "It got to the point where I was hating doing the band," he says. I was living in this house I couldn't quite afford, so we didn't have any time to make music, because we were either playing gigs that nobody came to, or at work."

All of which made the lyrics to Field Music's second LP, *Tones Of Town*, quite nihilistic. Things got worse.

It was scheduled to come out in September 2006, "so we booked a tour," says Peter.

"The infamous Tour Of Towns," says David.

"Because it's like *Tones Of Towns*," says Peter. "So we should do loads of little towns where nobody's ever heard of us, and nobody cares. Which actually could have been Manchester or Birmingham."

The album was pushed back to January 2007. The prospect of slogging away on the road any more filled the pair with dread – as did the invitation to support Snow Patrol in arenas, for which they felt creatively and financially ill-equipped. Two weeks after *Tones* came out, they told Memphis that they wouldn't be continuing. "We would have had to ask them for money," says Peter.

WHEN FIELD MUSIC released 2012's *Plumb*, money became the whole story. After the brothers discussed their finances with *The Observer*, they opened the paper to the headline, "We earn five grand

"I'VE BECOME
MORE
COMFORTABLE
WITH MY OWN
SELF-DOUBT"
DAVID BREWIS



Peter and David Brewis in the studio: "There's a certain ridiculousness to being in a band"

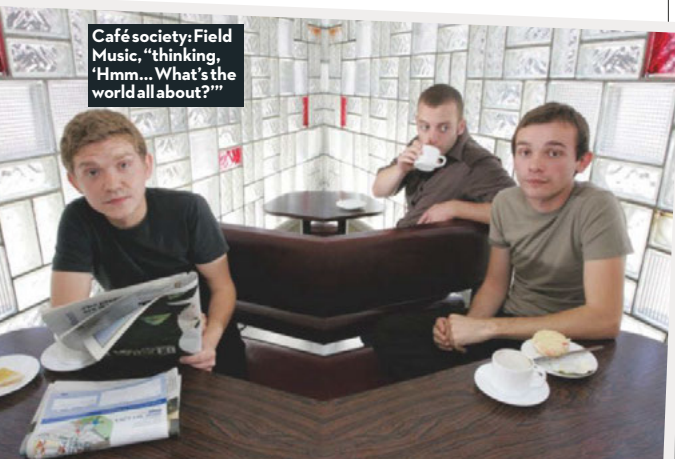
a year". The point was, David says, about illustrating their commitment to making Field Music happen, "even though it doesn't have great material rewards, and it's a precarious existence". Online, some people asked what they were moaning about. "And I never thought we were complaining. This is what we've chosen, and we're totally happy with it."

Field Music are as DIY as Fugazi, minus the dogma. They produce their own records, drive their own van, and don't take advances. "They help other bands out," says BBC 6Music's Marc Riley. "They are seriously a thing to be treasured. They should both carry blue Heritage plaques around with them on their backs." Their existence offered Sunderland's young musicians a different model of how to be, says Pete Gofton. "Kenickie and The Futureheads were pretty profligate during our time in the mainstream, and I think it affects one's ability to keep going. The Brewises kept their overheads low, and ultimately made a career for themselves."

The realisation that they could create their own context was what brought Field Music back after *Tones Of Town*. In the interim, in 2008, each brother had formed a well-received solo project: *The Week That Was*, Peter's homage to Japan, Peter Gabriel and Kate Bush, and David's School Of Language, a machine-lathed funk outfit. Thrill Jockey released David's *Sea From Shore* in the US, leading to a tour with Tortoise's Doug McCombs on bass, and a huge confidence boost.

"I did that with guys I'd never met before," says David. "Doug's attitude to learning my songs was like, 'It's basically C, it feels a bit like this'. I'm like, *no, no*, it must be *this* note and *this* note! Doug shrugs and plays what he was gonna play anyway. That was liberating – I needed to just get over it. We were gonna play 20 gigs in 25 days and I was gonna have to play a lot of guitar. I finished the tour feeling like, *I love playing guitar, I love Led Zeppelin!*"

After the fiddly live incarnations of *Tones Of Town* and *The Week That Was*, Field Music's third LP, 2010's *Measure*,

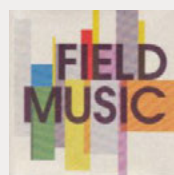


Café society: Field Music, "thinking, 'Hmm... What's the world all about?'"

BUYERS' GUIDE

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

From their quirky debut, via idiosyncratic side projects, this is Field Music on CD...



FIELD MUSIC FIELD MUSIC

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES, 2005

7/10

In which the Brewises set out their template: a sprightly, pastoral skewing of post-punk, R'n'B and prog.



FIELD MUSIC TONES OF TOWN

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES, 2007

7/10

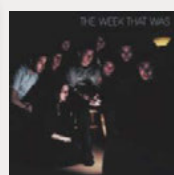
A kind of post-punk chamber pop, *Tones* is Field Music's most ornery album, and probably the one to blame for prevailing notions of them as a prog band.



SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE SEA FROM SHORE

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES, 2008

8/10 Unlike the clarity of Field Music's records, the production on David's solo debut is both agitated and exhilarating, full of vocal deconstruction as well as nods to Robert Wyatt and XTC.

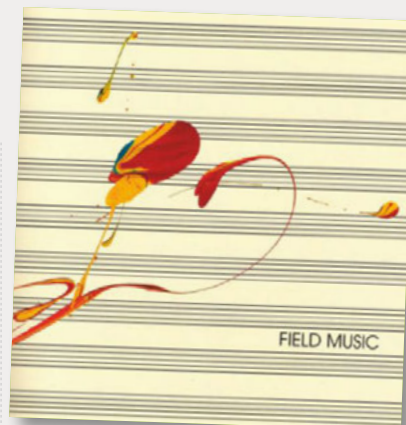


THE WEEK THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES, 2008

8/10

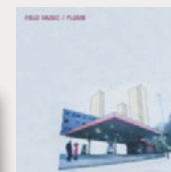
Indebted to Bush, Gabriel and Stravinsky, Peter's solo debut plies stentorian, paranoid art-rock, underpinned by juddering synths and string flourishes.



FIELD MUSIC MEASURE

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES, 2010

8/10 For a 70-minute double album, *Measure* is surprisingly light and dreamy, hewing closer to Fleetwood Mac's *Tusk* than Pink Floyd.



FIELD MUSIC PLUMB

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES, 2012

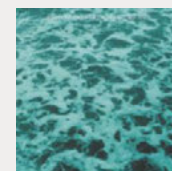
A medley-style suite of baroque pop songs that confronts personal responsibility and political grandstanding with the Brewises' usual quizzical flair.



SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE OLD FEARS

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES, 2014

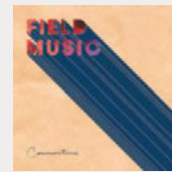
9/10 Drawing from Chaka Khan, Justin Timberlake and Prince, David's second solo album showcased a knack for nimble funk.



FIELD MUSIC MUSIC FOR DRIFTERS

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES, 2015

8/10 An aquatic and beautiful score for John Grierson's groundbreaking 1929 documentary *Drifters*, which followed a group of Shetland herring fishermen.



FIELD MUSIC COMMONTIME

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES, 2016

8/10 See full album review of *Commontime* on page 73.

became their classic rock double LP: one with riffs they could recreate live. In the time they'd been away, a fanbase had developed. It was around then that Jim Moir (comedian Vic Reeves) became obsessed. "They're one of those North-Eastern bands, like Roxy Music and Prefab Sprout, that pluck things from every musical fruit."

"Our first gigs back were great," says David. "Where had they all come from?" "It still might have only been 40 people, but still, it was 35 more," says Peter.

THE RECESSION MEANT that the brothers lost 8 Studio after making *Measure*, so they moved to a chilly Wearside industrial space to record *Plumb*, a rush of fragmented pop songs that recalled *Abbey Road*. That and *Commontime* were recorded on a budget of roughly £7,000 apiece, most of which is rent. Despite their love of highly produced records, the Brewises have no plan to work in an established studio. "Now we've got our particular aesthetic, I'd rather expand on that than try to start again with someone else," says David.

Over a decade in, the pair have fixed ideas about what Field Music is: practical but not serious; driven by vision, not gut instinct. But they're trying to loosen up and get closer to their audience. In 2014, David released the second School Of Language LP, *Old Fears*, a Scritti Politti-ish funk record about how meeting his wife ended his student self-pity. To match the more direct songwriting, he implemented a costume: slicked back hair and colourful clothes. ("You looked like the man from Del Monte without the hat," says Peter.) Another founding Field Music tenet is setting up the band's equipment in full view of the audience. It felt outré doing it in the School Of Language stage outfits, so they had Field Music Productions overalls made for changeover. The comparative silliness of having not one, but two, costumes nixed the tension they'd usually experience before gigs.

The Field Music live band shifts between albums; for *Commontime* they'll be joined by mainstays Kev Dosdale (guitar, synths), Andrew Lowther (bass), and new backing singer/keyboardist Liz Corney, who auditioned for the part. Her presence is also subtly altering the band's presentation. "There was something

"THEY SHOULD CARRY BLUE PLAQUES AROUND ON THEIR BACKS"
MARC RILEY, 6MUSIC

about auditioning people, their personalities and how they looked," says Peter. "I'd never have put myself down as this sort of person, but it was like, can you see this person onstage in the band? How would it come across with us? We've always been..."

"Dowdy blokes onstage," says David. "[Image] is another thing we've always been reticent and a bit embarrassed about, 'cos it seems frivolous."

"Whereas Liz, the day after the last rehearsal, was like, 'Right, what are we gonna wear?'" Peter adds. "It felt fun."

It all combines to a subtle shift in ethos for the cautious duo, even if they're not at Queen-level bombast just yet. "You have to be brave to do that sort of thing," Peter says. "It's all-or-nothing – if it falls flat on its arse, it's a failure. We've avoided failure by not going for the biggest thing. My dad says to me, you're very successful. It's like, Dad, we're not at all. He says, you are compared with a lot of other bands. Who? Exactly – you don't know them. For every band like us, there's 100 others that never got where we are, or where we're gonna get – which is probably where we are, that's our attitude. We are where we are, we're not aiming for the big time – we're aiming to survive." 🎵

Commontime is released by Memphis Industries on February 5

Field of dreams: three touring members bolster the band's live sound

BROTHERLY LOVES

CORNERSTONES

Artists and albums that influenced Field Music

DAVID BREWIS

THELONIOUS MONK MONK'S MUSIC

UNIVERSAL, 1957

"Thelonious Monk wrote some of the strangest melodies I've ever heard, but they're so catchy. I think he gave us the idea that we could take almost any crazy musical idea and make it into pop music."

ROXY MUSIC FOR YOUR PLEASURE

ISLAND, 1973

"Roxy Music managed to take odd lyrical and musical concepts, stack them up in unusual song structures and make compelling, catchy pop songs. I think only a couple of songs on their first two albums even have a chorus."

LED ZEPPELIN HOUSES OF THE HOLY

ATLANTIC, 1973

"Led Zeppelin were the first band we really got into. Our whole playing style and our approach to recording stem straight from Led Zeppelin."

THE LEFT BANKE

THERE'S GONNA BE A STORM: THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS 1966-1969

MERCURY, 1992

"The Left Banke gave us a template, especially for the things we were recording before the first LP. They built songs around piano or harpsichord playing slightly odd chords, pretty vocal harmonies, simple but funky drums and a string quartet."

PRINCE PARADE

PAISLEY PARK/WARNER BROS, 1986

"In an odd way, this is like an update of The Left Banke's sound but far sexier. Its texture is unlike anything else. Utterly fearless."

PETER BREWIS

KATE BUSH HOUNDS OF LOVE

EMI, 1985

"Our mam had this when it first came out so it's been a constant in our lives. It's permeated our music in more ways than we'll ever know."

THE BEATLES REVOLVER

PARLOPHONE, 1966

"This was the first Beatles album we immersed ourselves in. The hard panned stereo, the dryness and the double-tracked vocals are fairly evident on our first album."

THE FLAMING LIPS THE SOFT BULLETIN

WARNER BROS, 1999

"We heard a track from a free NME CD in 1999 and it sounded like nothing we'd ever heard before. Modular, luscious, and very ambitious. It led us to discover the best of prog rock. And helped us to ignore the worst."

THE BAND THE BAND

CAPITOL, 1969

"When we started, we wanted to be able to synthesise our influences in the way The Band did. We never sounded anything like them, but were inspired by their approach."

DEERHOOF MILKMAN

KILL ROCK STARS, 2004

"We heard this after we'd made our first record. It made me feel like we were right to make the record we did."

JULIA HOLTER



HAVE YOU IN MY WILDERNESS

THE ALBUM OF THE YEAR



dominorecordco.com

We Are All Prostitutes

BY THE POP GROUP

Bristol post-punks' second single, shaped by jazz, politics and the Jacksons

WHILE THE FIRST wave of punk centred primarily around London, post-punk truly flourished further afield, with the likes of Cabaret Voltaire in Sheffield, Joy Division in Manchester and Gang Of Four in Leeds mixing the fury of the Pistols and The Clash with more sophisticated, avant-garde influences. In Bristol, The Pop Group went even further than their contemporaries, infusing punk with the palettes of free jazz, dub and funk, singer Mark Stewart howling his charged lyrics over the frenzy.

"We all had this idea that if we were challenging ideas with the lyrics, then we wanted to challenge that with the music as well," explains Stewart today. "Maybe we got the wrong end of the stick 'cos we were from Bristol, but we thought punk was all about change and challenging stuff."

After Margaret Thatcher took power in May 1979, and the future began to look even bleaker, the group became increasingly politicised, setting up their own label, delving into murky conspiracy theories and becoming deeply involved in the CND cause. The most immediate result was "We Are All Prostitutes", a stand-alone single which matched a cacophonous, rumbling shuffle with distorted vocals, Dennis Bovell's innovative dub production and the deranged cello-playing of Tristan Honsinger, a new favourite of the group's.

"We went through changes incredibly quickly," recalls guitarist Gareth Sager. "We went from being excited about Richard Hell and Patti Smith and James Brown, to getting into things like Ornette Coleman and Miles Davis, and that all

happened within a year and a half. We just took in every little influence we could and tried to put it onto vinyl."

The band's next album, 1980's *For How Much Longer Do We Tolerate Mass Murder?* (reissued this month) would be their last until 2015's *Citizen Zombie*, but their political ideas – as well as the imagery on their Stewart-designed, Thatcher-baiting art – would unfortunately remain relevant. "I mean, times now are harsh," says Stewart, as he recalls ideas he formulated at the end of the 1970s. "I don't think I've changed in the way I look at things, because you just realise that what you learnt before was a load of rubbish, and that there's another hidden agenda under the onion layers of hidden agendas..." **TOM PINNOCK**

GARETH SAGER: When we were 19, people were like, 'Oh, these bunch of freaks', when everybody else was still playing pretty straight music. If you want to talk about 'revolution rock' or whatever, then you have to change the whole fundamental thing you're playing. Everything [in punk] seemed pretty conservative to us. We were really shocked at how straight everybody was happy being.

DENNIS BOVELL: They were the first punk or

WE ARE ALL PROSTITUTES
EVERYONE HAS THEIR PRICE
AND YOU TOO WILL LEARN
TO LIVE THE LIFE
AGGRESSION
COMPETITION
AMBITION CONSUMER FASCISM
CAPITALISM IS THE MOST BARRBARIC OF ALL RELIGIONS
DEPARTMENT STORES ARE OUR NEW CATHEDRALS
OUR CARS ARE MARTYRS TO THE CAUSE
WE ARE ALL PROSTITUTES
OUR CHILDREN SHALL RISE UP AGAINST US
BECAUSE WE ARE THE ONES TO BLAME
WE ARE THE ONES THEY'LL BLAME
THEY WILL GIVE US A NEW NAME
WE SHALL BE
HYPOCRITES HYPOCRITES HYPOCRITES
at this moment despair ends and tactics begin.

KEY PLAYERS



Mark Stewart
Vocals



Gareth Sager
Guitar, saxophone,
organ



Bruce Smith
Drums



Dan Catsis
Bass



Dennis Bovell
Production

post-punk band I worked with. It appealed to me – I'd been in a rock band and in my teens I was a guitar player. It was a chance to get in touch with my rock side again. So I met the lads and found that they were all very crazy, but in need of a referee to say, 'Well, I think this idea is a better idea than that one' or 'Here's a better way to approach this particular piece...'

SAGER: As young kids we signed with [Warner Bros-affiliated] Radar, but then realised that wasn't where The Pop Group should be.

MARK STEWART: So we formed our own label [Y Records], but it went through Rough Trade's distribution. For me, the whole DIY thing and the politics of being in control of our own destiny was as important as the music.

SAGER: When Thatcher got in, things went from being in colour to black and white, that's how I see it. Pop music has always been associated with the more left or liberal side of things, and this was the first time we'd really encountered in our lifetime more of a right-wing culture. Suddenly this horrendous bully from school was in charge and giving everyone a good kicking.

STEWART: It was a very strange time – there was this huge class war going on, and there were all



Mark Stewart: "I don't know... they were funny times"

these stories about the military talking about overthrowing the Labour government at the time because they wanted to nationalise things. The Queen Of Pain got elected and there were some of the biggest strikes in England since 1926.

SAGER: We hit this age where we started to really question everything. We were getting a lot of information about all these conspiracy theories, so that all fed into "Prostitutes". There was a bookshop in Bristol that had everything from Bukowski to heavy conspiracy books like *Vodka Cola* by Charles Levinson, which we all read. In hindsight, the facts were questionable, but it opened up our tiny little late-teenage minds to the fact there was a big world out there. It affected Mark particularly, and he started to put more political thought in his lyrics.

STEWART: I was open to a lot more sources of information than some other people at the time. I was devouring all this weird, extreme literature and underground texts. I've been like that since I was 12 or 13, and to a certain extent I blame that on David Bowie. There was a period where he was doing these interviews where he'd just talk about other people – Burroughs and Jean Genet. So I'd run off and find out more about them, and it was down to bloody Bowie. Weird. He was just passing on mad information without being a filter, which was quite cool.

BRUCE SMITH: It was a quest for more information. And all that was inspiring, along with

our enthusiasm for the most far-out free jazz musicians from the States.

SAGER: On "We Are All Prostitutes" we were throwing everything at people. It starts with a very Neanderthal riff from me – the second time round you can hear the bottleneck fall off my finger. Then there's a fantastic James Brown groove written by

"When Thatcher got in, things went from being in colour to black and white, that's how I see it"

GARETH SAGER



John Waddington and then on to these counterpoint funk riffs by me and Dan. We just hammered it out, with this crazy rhythm between Dan and Bruce. I don't think they can recreate it any more 'cos they don't know what the hell they were doing back then!

SMITH: I'm sure I was playing what I thought was a version of a drumbeat from a Jacksons record called "Shake Your Body (Down To The Ground)". We had a rehearsal studio in Bristol that we could use

day or night. So a lot of things came from just going into the room with no set idea. In that regard it was uncontrived. We'd make every effort not to do anything derivative, kitschy or sentimental.

STEWART: A lot of stuff we wrote after the first album was lyrically very current, all about things happening in that month or in that week. We treated it as a kind of newspaper.

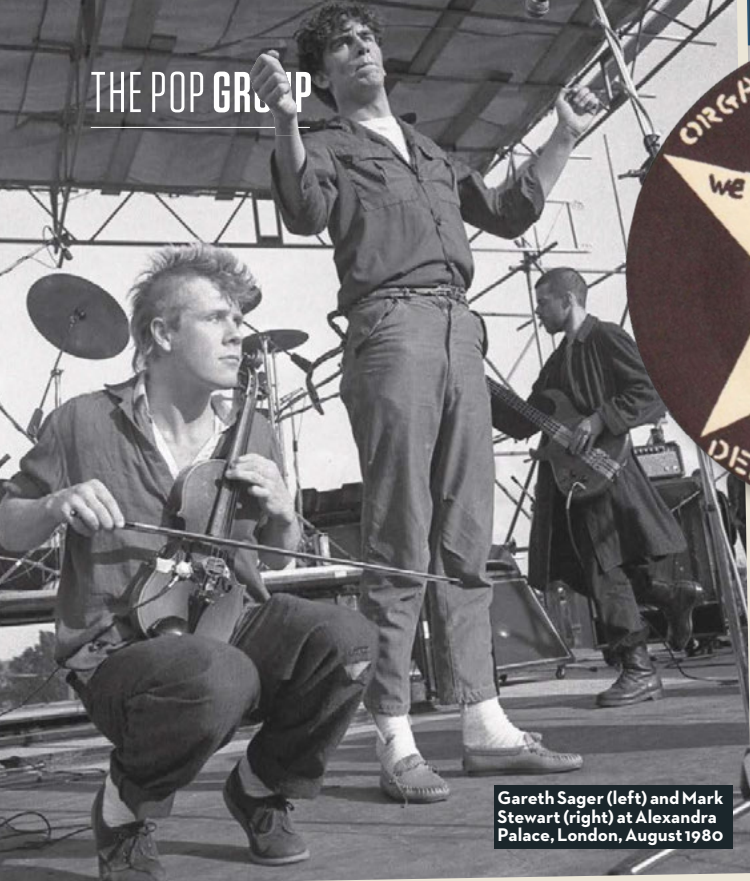
SAGER: The words on "Prostitutes", like "*capitalism is the most barbaric religion*" – I mean, the whole lyric knocked into a three-and-a-half-minute pop song is just fantastic. The message is there and it was pretty articulate.

STEWART: I was hanging around with a guy called Robert Eringer, who wrote this book called *The Global Manipulators*. It was exposing the whole con of the history and politics we learnt at school, and how there were a whole load of hidden agendas. I was reading [Levinson's] *Vodka Cola*, which looks at the Cold War, and says that the Germans basically financed the Russian Revolution because they didn't want a second front. And they then encouraged the Irish during WWI as they wanted to destabilise another front. If you look at what's going on now with all these proxy wars and false flag attacks, it's nonsense, what we've been told, and people are dying when they don't really know what they're fighting for.

SAGER: That line "*Our children shall rise up against us*" made my mum cry... but that's what 19-year olds are meant to do to their mothers, I guess. Dan had just started playing bass instead of guitar, so the bass is really wild on it.

DAN CATSIS: I couldn't play with my fingers at that time so I had to play with a plectrum. When you switch from guitar to bass, it takes time to ➔

THE POP GROUP



Gareth Sager (left) and Mark Stewart (right) at Alexandra Palace, London, August 1980



recording the sound of the clap bouncing off the ceiling. It gives the appearance of an octave down. And if you clap with your hands cupped, it gives you a smack sound deeper than with your palms flat. So that's the Bovell technique! I also said to Mark, "Why don't we put your voice through a fuzzbox?" And everyone went, "Yeah!"

SMITH: Dennis' approach to the drums comes from his reggae records. So he'd favour making the drums dry, with tape and newspaper on the heads. And that allows a lot of control with the mixing, you can treat each thing separately.

BOVELL: There was a lot of overdubbing with The Pop Group – when we were recording *Y*, one day we recorded about two reels of just pure feedback from Gareth, and then we sat there noting which bits were the most exciting bits, editing them off and then spinning them back into the multitrack and timing it so each bit of feedback would be at a particular point. Which is now known as sampling, but we were using tape. Gareth had these amazing ideas, and John Waddington was a very funky guitar player. They made some amazing guitar squeals, and got some really funky sounds.

STEWART: What was really, really crucial to me and the rest of the band was the idea of density of sound. We were listening to a lot of experimental *musique concrète*, and a lot of crazy free jazz, and that's how Tristan Honsinger came in.

SAGER: Me and Mark went to see Tristan at the London Musicians Collective in front of about seven people, which is one of the greatest gigs I've ever seen. It was just him playing his cello, half the time with a cardboard box on his head, and I just thought, 'This guy's the greatest.' At some point I had this brainwave and thought, 'Wow, if we could get Tristan to play on this...' I remember he asked for 60 quid, which seemed an enormous amount to me at that time.

CATSIS: Mark and Gareth could get anyone up and ask them to do anything, they were never starstruck in that way. Unless maybe for Mark if it had been Bowie... that might've been different.

SAGER: The bits you hear from him are what he did at the time. The crazy voice at the start? That's him. And we used the cello like a dub instrument.

CATSIS: Dennis brought this amazing ability to the desk, he played it like an instrument. He was a master tape operator as well. I can remember him doing the B-side ["*Amnesty International Report On British Army Torture Of Irish Prisoners*"] and it just being amazing how he took the master tape and spliced it back together from bits and pieces. And somehow managed to keep the beat. A real artist.

SAGER: The B-side was a 20-minute thing that we cut up. I heard the full version not so long ago actually, and it may well appear sometime.

STEWART: ["*Amnesty International...*"] was just a human reaction to what is happening. I'm not trying to turn it into some sort of slogan. I don't know how to explain it, it's just things like that I just gotta say it, I can't stand back and not say it.

SAGER: We didn't do *For How Much Longer...* with Dennis. We couldn't afford him [laughs], or he'd had enough of us, which was much more likely!

BOVELL: The thing was, we all went in different directions. I got busy with other productions and opened my own studio, and they were pretty much falling apart. I don't think it was a case of them not being able to afford me, it was me not being able to afford the time to work with them.

SMITH: We'd always wanted "Prostitutes" to be on the record. I can't even remember why it wasn't, but it's good that it is there now [on the reissue]. Whenever I hear it now it jumps out the speakers.

SAGER: We've been playing "Prostitutes" live a lot again, and it feels very potent now. It's an old message but it really rings true.

CATSIS: "Prostitutes" is still amazing. There's nothing in the lyrics which isn't still happening, unfortunately. Things are highly complicated. Back then it was black/white, left/right, it seemed simple, but now I'd say it isn't.

BOVELL: I listened to "Prostitutes" the other day, and it's electric, man, it's dark as hell.

SAGER: We were naïve, and attempting to play way beyond our ability, but that's what makes it interesting. Maybe that's what we got from punk, the idea of just going out and doing it.

STEWART: The biggest thing about that single is the T-shirt, though! I made a T-shirt where I put this picture of Thatcher flicking the V-sign, and it was bootlegged all over the world. We had these ideas of this portable, wearable anti-propaganda – I don't know, they were funny times. ☺

The reissue of *For How Much Longer Do We Tolerate Mass Murder?* is out on February 19

FACT FILE

- **Written by:** The Pop Group
- **Produced by:** Dennis Bovell & The Pop Group
- **Recorded at:** Berry Street Studios, London
- **Personnel:** Mark Stewart (vocals), Gareth Sager (guitar, saxophone, organ), Bruce Smith (drums), Dan Catsis (bass), John Waddington (guitars), Tristan Honsinger (cello, vocals)
- **Released:** November 9, 1979
- **UK/US chart positions:** -/-

DAVID CORIO/GETTY IMAGES

TIMELINE

1977 The Pop Group form in Bristol, inspired by punk, funk, jazz and avant-garde art and poetry

April 20, 1979 The Pop Group release their debut LP, *Y*, on Rough Trade. Less than a month later, Margaret

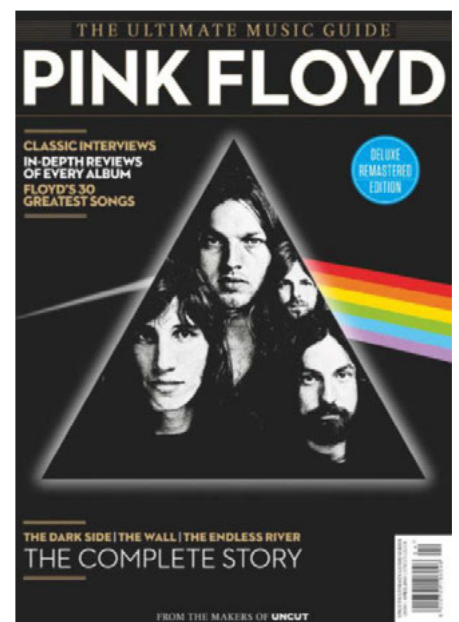
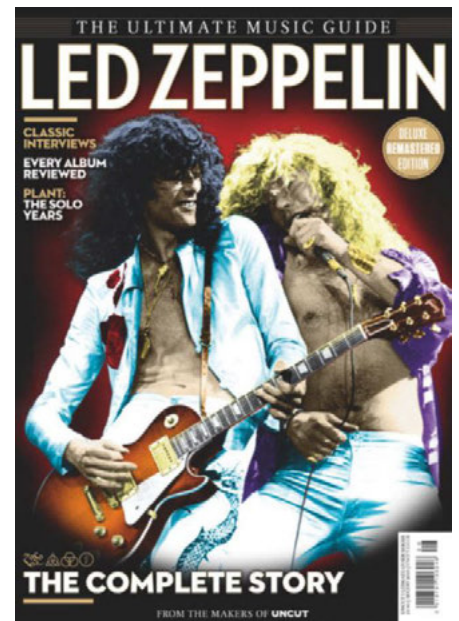
Thatcher becomes PM
November 9, 1979 "We Are All Prostitutes" is released on *Y*/Rough Trade, and at that point

is arguably the band's most overtly political statement
March 21, 1980 *Ferociously topical For*

How Much Longer Do We Tolerate Mass Murder?, is released – "We Are All Prostitutes" is not included

FROM THE MAKERS OF **UNCUT**

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Black Sheep Boy

Story: Graeme Thomson

Fifty years on from his debut, *Uncut* considers the extraordinary music and harrowing life story of TIM HARDIN. A tale of blood, arson, rooftop chases, Olympian drug abuse, bespoke carpentry and a deathless legacy of songs. “He was truly the wildest guy I’d ever met,” says one old friend. “It didn’t seem like anyone else’s rules of behaviour worked for him.”

TOURING WITH TIM Hardin in 1968 was not a job for the faint-hearted. “In Oklahoma City he looked at me after three songs, said, ‘I’ve got heartburn’, and walked offstage,” recalls Hardin’s friend and long-suffering pianist Warren Bernhardt. “Before one gig at the Whisky A Go Go he lost all ability to use his hands. They were completely numb. More than once I saw him come out of the dressing room with blood dripping down his arms. With Timmy, you never knew what was going to happen. He flew me out for a show at UCLA – and there was no gig. It was bizarre. We were walking around with our instruments and we couldn’t find it.” Bernhardt laughs with sheer incomprehension. “Why would you fly someone out to California for an imaginary gig?”

The year 1968 was an auspicious one for Hardin. His first three albums of darkly introspective songs, blending pop, folk, blues and jazz, had been critical successes. Following Bobby Darin’s worldwide hit in 1966 with Hardin’s best-known composition, “If I Were A Carpenter”,

scores of artists were now gravitating towards his material, among them The Four Tops, Scott Walker, Glen Campbell and even Cilla Black. The same year, Bob Dylan was moved to describe Hardin as “the greatest songwriter alive today”.

Hardin’s growing reputation, however, was undermined by his wayward streak. Bernhardt’s list of misdemeanours is far from exhaustive. In April, Hardin turned up 90 minutes late for the recording of his live album, *Tim Hardin 3*, at New York’s Town Hall, and was so stoned during the show that he fell off his chair. A tour of Britain that summer was cut short after he dismissed his band during a prestigious appearance at the Royal Albert Hall, then nodded out mid-set. “The live shows were a crapshoot,” says vibes player Mike Mainieri. “We didn’t know how late he would be or what state he was going to be in. I was an organised guy, but I made an exception in Tim’s case, because I loved his music. Some nights were magical, just heartbreakingly beautiful and poetic, and that kept me going back for another little taste.” ☺



Tim Hardin live at
New York's Kraft
Music Hall,
August 21, 1968



With producer Erik Jacobsen in the early '60s

➤ One of the most original and exquisitely talented artists of his generation, Hardin displayed an unerring knack for self-sabotage. Today, 35 years after his death at the age of 39, his compositions are best known via interpretations by more famous names, whether it's Johnny Cash's "If I Were A Carpenter", Rod Stewart's "Reason To Believe", or the Small Faces' "Red Balloon". The songs have always connected, but the songwriter ultimately proved too unreliable for stardom.

"He was his own worst enemy," says his former publisher, Charles Koppelman. "He had every gift to be a superstar except the gift of controlling his bad habits. He once set fire to my bungalow when he nodded out with a cigarette in his hand. That was the life of Tim Hardin. It's a question of what might have been."

BORN IN EUGENE, Oregon, two days before Christmas Day, 1941, Tim Hardin came from a musical lineage. His father Hal had been a stand-up bass player in a travelling band, and his grandmother Manner a noted pianist. In later life Hardin talked little about his family, but in "Black Sheep Boy" he identifies as "*the family's unowned boy*", wilful, charismatic, set apart.

Having joined the Marines in the late '50s, serving in the Far East, Hardin returned home as a heroin addict. He moved to New York in 1961 to study at the American Academy Of Dramatic Art, and began performing acoustic blues in the clubs and coffee houses of Greenwich Village, befriending fellow addicts Karen Dalton and Fred Neil in the process. By the time folkie Erik Jacobsen caught up with Hardin in 1963, he had moved on to Cambridge, Massachusetts.

A banjo player cutting his teeth as a producer/Svengali, Jacobsen was looking for singers for his embryonic dance craze, "The Slurp", and had been alerted to Hardin via a Boston folk duo. "I called Tim up about working together and the first thing he said was,

"THE 15
MINUTES
AFTER TIM
SHOT UP
WERE
PIVOTAL"
JOHN
SEBASTIAN



'Do you have any money? Send me a plane ticket and 100 bucks.' I met him in New York, and he immediately said, 'Have you got any shit?', meaning smack. We went over to my apartment, sat on a chair and started singing, and I instantly forgot about my dance craze. This guy's voice was from another world. The control, the dynamics, the tremolo. He was incredible."

At a time when hard and often artless male voices were in vogue, Hardin's rich vibrato marked him out. His repertoire, on the other hand, was straight blues: "Stagger Lee", "House Of The Rising Sun", "Hoochie Coochie Man". He loved Jimmy Reed, Chuck Berry and, above all, Ray Charles.

Impressed, Jacobsen cut a series of demos with his new protégé. "On one occasion he was accompanied by a friend who stole everything from the studio office, even the signs from the bathroom door," he says. "But on the strength of those recordings, Columbia decided to do a test session with Tim." Jacobsen roped in some local friends, including Cass Elliot and John Sebastian, who, prior to forming The Lovin' Spoonful, was playing harmonica around Greenwich Village. Sebastian first met Hardin the night before the Columbia session. "It was midnight, and there was a knock on the door of my apartment. It's Tim, and he goes, 'We're going to do a session tomorrow, and you know what's going to happen? You're going to play better than you ever played in your life. You know why? Because you're going to be playing with me.'"

"Tim had a magnetic personality," says Jacobsen. "He was good-looking, soulful, funny and bright, but he was not a jovial guy. Smiles were given begrudgingly. Women loved him, and he went from place to place, gaining their trust. He took advantage of these gals pretty bad. He was a conniving, lying type of guy."

Despite Hardin's pre-match hype, the Columbia recordings were a disaster. "He nodded out early on and we couldn't use anything," says Jacobsen, who shortly

afterwards signed Hardin to the stable of Charles Koppelman and Don Rubin, two New York impresarios. The pair secured a record deal with Verve-Forecast just as Hardin hit upon a songwriting seam of astonishing depth and maturity.

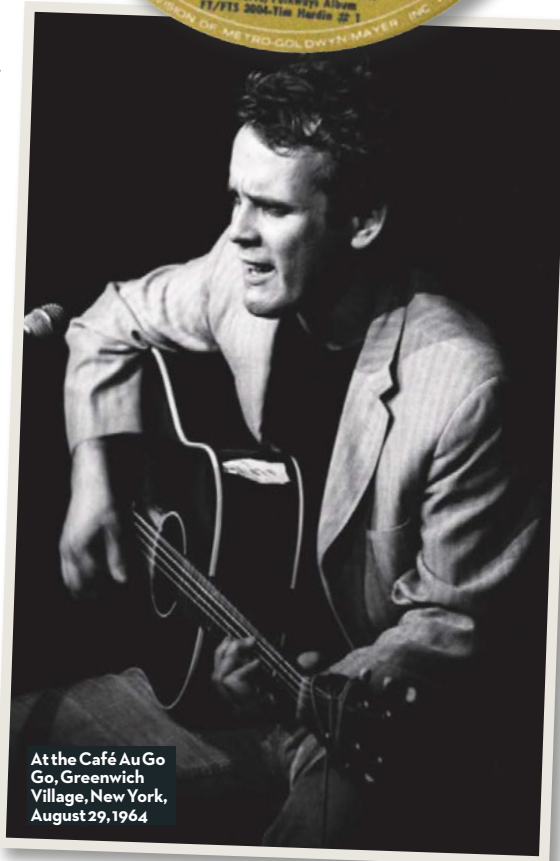
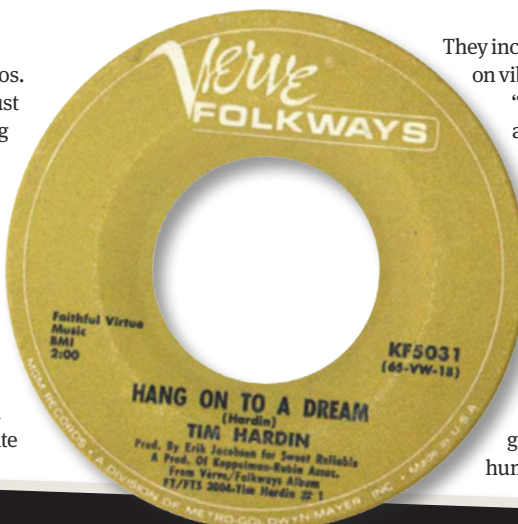
The material he wrote and recorded in 1964 and 1965 include most of the songs on which his reputation still rests, among them “How Can We Hang On To A Dream?”, “Misty Roses”, “Reason To Believe”, “It’ll Never Happen Again”, “Don’t Make Promises”, “Red Balloon”, “Part Of The Wind” and “Black Sheep Boy”. Otherworldly, poetic and darkly romantic, their origins were prosaic. “For Tim, money for drugs was his paramount motivation for everything,” says Jacobsen. “I paid him \$50 to write each song, my only stipulation was that it had to have two verses and a chorus. You’ll notice there are few third verses and bridges in his songs!”

Only two songs on his first two records are over three minutes long. Some are as short as 70 seconds. The economy, somehow, is part of the appeal. “There’s something very disarming about how simple those songs are,” says Will Sheff of Okkervil River, the Texan band which recorded an entire album of Hardin songs in 2005. “A Tim Hardin song never outstays its welcome. It’s very short and pretty: one verse, one chorus, second verse, and he’s out of there. It’s like a tiny, perfectly cut gem.”

Cutting these diamonds in the studio was a precarious business. “The 15 minutes after he shot up were pivotal moments in the session,” says Sebastian. “He’d go to the bathroom – we’d time it, we’d let him nod for a minute, and then we’d go. Really cool stuff happened, but it was difficult.”

“The sessions were stressful,” says Jacobsen. “You never knew if he was going to come in, but when he was on, he rarely missed a note. He could do a couple of takes and that was it.”

His debut single, “How Can We Hang On To A Dream?”, was released in February 1966. *Tim Hardin 1* followed in July, the bare recordings fleshed out with strings and keyboards, not always to Hardin’s liking, for a rich pop-folk ambience. Shortly after its release, he met the group of New York jazz musicians who would become his principal live band for the next few years.



At the Café Au Go Go, Greenwich Village, New York, August 29, 1964

They included Eddie Gomez on bass, Mike Mainieri on vibraphone and Warren Bernhardt on piano. “The first time we met, he opens up this satchel and there are all these vials of drugs,” says Bernhardt. “It was like no other night I’ve ever had in New York. He had a fifth of bourbon and a cowboy hat and we visited people he knew around the Upper West Side and the Village, including Nico. He was truly the wildest guy I’d ever met. It didn’t seem like anyone else’s rules of behaviour worked for him; he had his own system of values. He’d do and say things to offend you, but if you got beyond that he could be a remarkably fun guy to hang out with. Tremendous sense of humour. Very kind, very generous. I’d never met anybody like him.”

Hardin was booked for a week at The Scene, a club on West 46th Street, during which he delivered a crash course in his cavalier approach to live performance. “His music was pretty simple, like folk, but he loved jazz players who could improvise,” says Mainieri. “There were no set arrangements. He’d just get up and start, and might not sing a verse again, or he’d suddenly go to the bridge. It was like, ‘Oh, he’s going here... an extra four beats!’” “Sometimes he was downright mediocre,” says Bernhardt. “Other times he was the greatest singer I’d ever heard in my life. We had a week at The Scene. We played Tuesday to Friday, and then on the Saturday Tim disappeared. He was gone, and we played without him. Turned out he was in Colorado. So I saw the erratic side of him early on. He could vaporise at any time.”

By this time, Hardin had left New York for Los Angeles. “He moved to escape people he owed money to,” says Jacobsen. “He was supposed to deliver some heroin to the Lower East Side, but it went wrong and he was chased onto a rooftop. He got himself into deeper and deeper trouble, so he left. He went cold turkey on a cross-country bus journey. When I went to visit he was staying in Lenny Bruce’s place in L.A. He played me some new stuff and we did some demo sessions.”

KAI SHUMAN/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

BUYER'S GUIDE FIVE ESSENTIAL TIM HARDIN ALBUMS



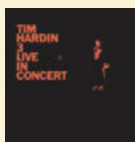
TIM HARDIN 1
(VERVE-FORECAST, 1966)

Deserves a place among the canonical albums of 1966. One or two tracks are bluesy filler. The rest (“Misty Roses”, “Reason To Believe”, “Don’t Make Promises”, “It’ll Never Happen Again”, et al) are the sublime songs which forged Hardin’s reputation.



TIM HARDIN 2
(VERVE-FORECAST, 1967)

His most complete record. The opening four-song run is a match for any album of the era, marred only by “Baby Close Its Eyes”, a saccharine ode to his newborn son. Also includes the magnificent “Speak Like A Child” and the self-aware “Tribute To Hank Williams” (“I didn’t know you, but I’ve been places you’ve been”).



TIM HARDIN 3: LIVE IN CONCERT
(VERVE-FORECAST, 1968)

Recorded with a fine (if sorely tested) band at New York Town Hall, this is a valuable, audio vérité document of Hardin’s mercurial live presence. “Reason To Believe” is effortless, but “Misty Roses” is a high-wire act, and almost a write-off. And so it goes.



TIM HARDIN 4
(VERVE, 1969)

Recorded prior to his debut album, a patchy but historically fascinating account of Hardin as an acoustic blues troubadour and derivative fledgling songwriter. That’s John Sebastian puffing away on blues harp on several songs.



SUITE FOR SUSAN MOORE...
(COLUMBIA, 1969)

The cool precision of Hardin’s writing unravels – compellingly – on an intense, fragmentary and underrated work. Deeply personal, richly allegorical, rambling poetry recitations sit alongside deep blue incantations such as “Once-Touched By Flame”.

➔ Two new songs were inspired by his relationship with Susan Morss, a wealthy young actress known professionally as Susan Yardley, who starred in daytime soap *The Young Marrieds*. One was the ruefully romantic “The Lady Came From Baltimore”. The other was “If I Were A Carpenter”, a humbled declaration of devotion across the social divide. “He used to send us songs in a wooden box that he had made himself,” says Charles Koppelman. “That’s the way I got ‘If I Were A Carpenter’. I knew it was a classic straight away. I had a meeting with another of our acts, Bobby Darin, who was going through a lean spell, and a week later we were in the studio. It was that quick. Tim hadn’t recorded it properly himself, although his demo was pretty darn good.”

Darin’s lushly orchestrated version of Hardin’s new composition became a Top 10 in the US and UK in October ’66, much to its writer’s chagrin. “He hated the Darin thing,” says Bernhardt. “He liked the fact people were listening to his music, but he wanted them to hear him doing it.” It was the start of a gold rush on Hardin material, as it became clear that his songs were easier to deal with than he was. “His drug habit had become so evident, everyone knew it was part of the package,” says John Sebastian. “If you could separate the song from the guy, you didn’t have to deal



with someone smacked out onstage or in the studio.”

Hardin’s own version of “If I Were A Carpenter” appeared on *Tim Hardin 2*, released in April 1967 and featuring Morss on the cover, pregnant with their son Damion, born in LA on February 28, 1967. Hardin and Jacobsen parted company before the album was finished. “By that time I had a heavy involvement with The Lovin’ Spoonful, and Tim was a little jealous,” says Jacobsen. “He felt I was letting him down, but he was so damn difficult to work with. I didn’t see him for years.” *Tim Hardin 2* was completed using demos and songs from sessions dating back to 1964, fleshed out with overdubs. Running to a mere 22 minutes, it is his finest (third of an) hour, the honed essence of Hardin.

WITH MONEY POURING in from publishing, early in 1968 Hardin and his young family joined the exodus of singer-songwriters relocating to Woodstock. Living in a fine house in Upstate New York, he was visited by Jimi Hendrix, who dandled Damion on his knee, as well as the area’s most famous artist-in-residence, Bob Dylan, who was already a fan. Around the time Hardin arrived, Dylan and The Band were bashing through “If I Were A Carpenter” in Big Pink, a spirited rendition recently unveiled on *The Basement Tapes Complete*. Much later, in 1994, Dylan took to performing “The Lady Came From Baltimore” in his live set. “Bob Dylan came over because he was blown away by dad,” says Damion Hardin. “My mother says that Dad took me over to Dylan’s house and I knocked over Dylan’s guitar, and Dylan got mad about it.”

“I don’t think there was all that much interaction,” says Warren Bernhardt. “I think Tim envied Dylan and was a little jealous of his success. Tim had that side: why isn’t it me? I remember he was mad when *John Wesley Harding* came out because he claimed that John Wesley Hardin was one of his relatives. It was all bullshit, but he was mad that Dylan did it!” His musical tastes were picky. “He hated the Stones. He thought The Beatles were OK. He liked Dr John’s first album, and Cat Stevens and Fred Neil. He loved Ray Charles, but I never heard him gush about anybody.”

In the period following *Tim Hardin 2*, Hardin released three further LPs, none of which featured new songs or fresh studio recordings. Some of his 1964 blues demos were repackaged in ’67 as *This Is Tim Hardin*, then raided again for *Tim Hardin 4* in 1969. “*Tim Hardin 4* was the result of them not being able to get Tim into the studio to do his job,” says Sebastian. “It was kind of a desperation move.”

In between came *Tim Hardin 3*, cut live at New York Town Hall, April 10, 1968, and released that November. It almost never happened. “When it came to show time we couldn’t find him,” says Koppelman. “He showed up an hour and a half late, and in the middle of one song he fell off the chair.”

“I was disappointed in the Town Hall performance, because there was no real rehearsal,” says Mike Mainieri. “He was stoned and I was really pissed off, but that wasn’t unusual. I remember once we had three days in Philadelphia and I left after the second day. There was a brawl. He was a tough little dude, he could be violent.”

Shortly afterwards, Koppelman and Rubin severed their ties, exasperated by Hardin’s inability to get his act together. John Sebastian, too, had started actively avoiding him. “I hated seeing him,” he says. “He abused people’s trust and good nature, and unfortunately the weight of that fell on the people who were trying to do the most for him.”

“He sabotaged things himself,” says Bernhardt. “He got into bad management, he must have had a hundred tour managers. He was a magician at music, but when it came to dealing with the people, he wasn’t always the best.”

Hardin signed to Columbia in 1969, and cut a smartly turned out cover of Bobby Darin’s “Simple Song Of Freedom”

FIVE GREAT HARDIN COVERS



SCOTT WALKER BLACK SHEEP BOY

(SCOTT 2, 1967)

If anybody can empathise with the “family’s unowned boy”, you feel, it’s Walker, who croons Hardin’s hymn of otherness magnificently over a satisfyingly meaty arrangement, swept with luxurious strings.

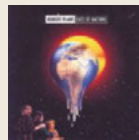


ROD STEWART REASON TO BELIEVE

(EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY, 1971)

The final track on Stewart’s 1971 album is an interpretative

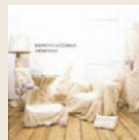
masterclass, colouring in Hardin’s sketch with rolling piano, Hammond organ, stand-up bass and fiddle. Initially released as the A-side of “Maggie May”, he still performs it today.



ROBERT PLANT IF I WERE A CARPENTER

(FATE OF NATIONS, 1993)

Sung by everyone from Johnny Cash to John Holt and Willie Nelson, Plant’s dramatic, romantic reading brings an Eastern flavour, with dust-blown strings and sitar.



KATHRYN WILLIAMS HOW CAN WE HANG ON TO A DREAM?

(RELATIONS, 2004)

A highlight of Williams’ fine covers album, this gloriously stark rendition puts xylophone, cello and unvarnished melancholy at the fore. Compelling proof of how adaptable Hardin’s songs can be.



MARK LANEGAN RED BALLOON

(REASONS TO BELIEVE: THE SONGS OF TIM HARDIN, 2012)

An earthy blues played on open-tuned acoustic guitar, Hardin’s dark tale of heroin and lost innocence covers territory Lanegan knows all too well, and he delivers with powerful understatement.

Scott Walker, 1967

HANG ON TO A DREAM

Damion Hardin recalls his final meeting with his father...

“IT’S NOT A great last memory. He had come over to the house in LA where I lived with Mom, and I just wanted to get out. I was 13 and a budding addict myself at that point. I had some pot I wanted to smoke, and I couldn’t be bothered with him. I said I had to go to a birthday party, and he knew I was lying. He said, ‘I don’t



see presents?’ He knew bullshit when he heard it, but I took off. Unfortunately, that was the last time I saw him. My most powerful experience with his music came later, on my 21st birthday. I decided to put on “Baby Close Its Eyes”. I just imagined Mom and Dad and the glow they must have had when I was born: how it was love. I imagined the hospital scene and I started bawling so hard. Most of what I have with my dad is imaginary. I still talk to him a couple of times a year. I ask him questions and he answers me as clear as a bell. ‘No grey areas. Keep it simple, man.’ And I try to.”



At New York's Kraft Music Hall with his live band, August 21, 1968

as a standalone single. A straightforward anthem, it provided Hardin with his sole US Top 40, something he viewed with bittersweet detachment. “He didn’t like it,” says Bernhardt. “I never played it with him, he never did it in concerts.”

Instead, he spent months with a remote recording truck parked in front of his Woodstock home, using the porch as a control room. The resulting album, *Suite For Susan Moore And Damion: We Are One, One, All In One*, was an ambitious, heartfelt and somewhat desperate love letter to a family unit already falling apart. “Around this time my mom took me and left,” says Damion Hardin. “Later, she had the unfortunate task of explaining why. She said, ‘Your father is a very, very talented person, but he has some issues that were a problem.’”

Shortly after the album’s release, at 9pm on August 15, 1969, Hardin appeared on the opening night of Woodstock, backed by a new group of musicians. Drummer Steve Booker recalls going up to Woodstock the night before the show. “Tim was sitting in his living room nude, with a great big watermelon in front of him. He sat there like a very illuminated soul, singing and playing his guitar.” Bill Chelf was hired to play keyboards. “Not everybody got along with Tim,” he says. “He had one band rule: you had to get your own drugs! On the night, we weren’t very together. We didn’t realise the scale of it and didn’t have time to rehearse and gel.”

Hardin’s short, erratic – though at times compelling – performance was not included in the subsequent film, and his already precarious career began to wane. 1971’s *Bird On A Wire* featured only four original songs and barely scraped into the *Billboard* 200. He registered with a methadone programme at Gracie Square Hospital in Manhattan, but struggled to get clean. He sold his copyrights, says Damion Hardin, “for a suitcase full of cash”. Shortly afterwards Hardin left for London, where he made two patchy records: *Painted Bird* (1972) and *Nine* (1973). “I spent time with him in London,” says his son. “There was an attempted reconciliation with Mom, and

I remember being really nervous about meeting him. He picked us up in a Rolls-Royce at the airport, the kind of flashy thing he enjoyed doing when he could. Things didn’t work out, and I didn’t see him again for years.”

Living off-grid, Hardin surfaced again in the summer of 1976 at the Bottom Line in New York, with Bernhardt playing piano. “I realised that I couldn’t work with this guy anymore,” he says. “He was sucking energy from me. I called it astral vampirism. It was ghastly. We never spoke after that.”

“I THINK TIM WAS A LITTLE JEALOUS OF DYLAN’S SUCCESS” WARREN BERNHARDT

BY 1978, HARDIN was living in West Hollywood, renting a house a block away from his son’s school. “I went over every day, and he taught me how to kick a field goal in the front yard,” says Damion Hardin. “We didn’t spend a lot of time together, but most of it was about football.”

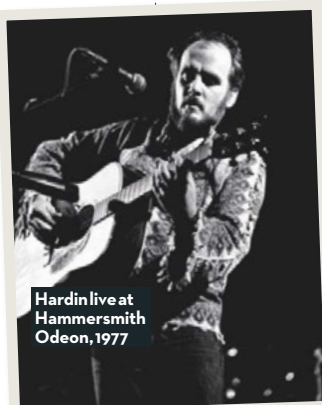
By chance, Erik Jacobsen found himself in the same studio as Hardin at the end of the ’70s and failed to realise that the “chubby bald guy in the corner” was the devilish roustabout he’d known a decade before. “He was unrecognisable. Life had been hard on him.” Hardin was working on new tracks, eventually released in incomplete form in 1981 as *Unforgiven*. “He called me just before he died,” says Mike Mainieri. “He said, ‘I’ve got it together. I’m making another LP, you

can help me with the arrangements.’ He said he’d get the flights sorted. Just a few days later, he was gone.”

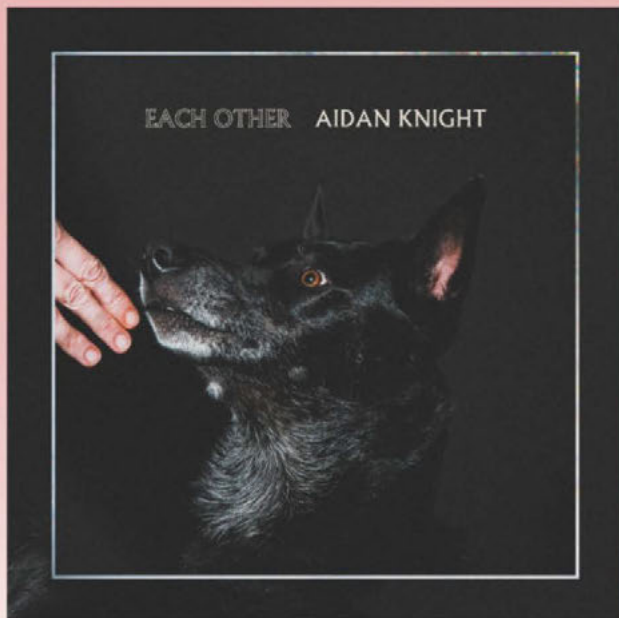
When Hardin died of a heroin overdose six days after his 39th birthday, on December 29, 1980, his demise passed virtually unreported. More than 35 years on, Charles

Koppelman laments the fact he’s still not a household name, but celebrates the longevity of his work. “He was the most miraculous of songwriters and singers, and I’m extremely proud that I continue to hear his songs. He’s one of the unsung heroes.”

“He knew how great he was, but I’m not sure he could handle his greatness,” says Warren Bernhardt. “Onstage, we got to places I never got to with anyone else. I’ve played with some amazing people – and Tim was the best.”



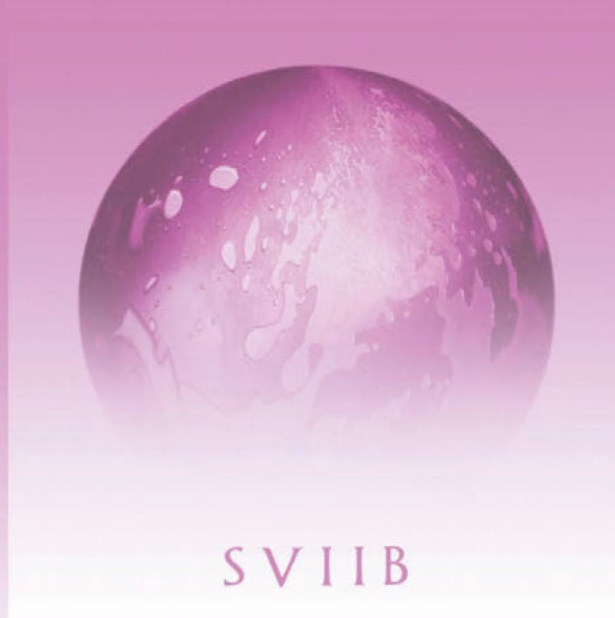
Hardin live at Hammersmith Odeon, 1977



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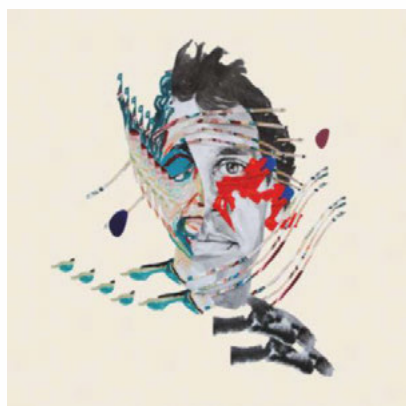
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THIS MONTH: ELTON JOHN | STEVE MASON | RANGDA & MORE



TOM ANDREW



ANIMAL COLLECTIVE Painting With

DOMINO

Bubblegum psych-pop in excelsis as the merry pranksters almost clean up their act. *By Piers Martin*

TRACKLIST

- 1 FloriDada
- 2 Hocus Pocus
- 3 Vertical
- 4 Lying In The Grass
- 5 The Burglars
- 6 Natural Selection
- 7 Bagels In Kiev
- 8 On Delay
- 9 Spilling Guts
- 10 Summing The Wretch
- 11 Golden Gal
- 12 Recycling

8/10

TRAVELLERS PASSING
THROUGH Baltimore-
Washington International

Airport heading home for Thanksgiving on November 25 last year may well have heard some strange new pop music coming from the airport's speakers. As discreet promotion to herald the arrival of their latest album, one of Baltimore's best-known experimental jam-bands, Animal Collective, were pumping out their 11th long-player on a loop throughout the day to anyone who cared to listen. Quite what effect this had on unsuspecting travellers is not

known – it surely drove staff nuts by the end of the day – but the fact that an Animal Collective record was deemed suitable to be aired non-stop in a public building on the eve of a national holiday gives some indication of the character of the music. No two ways about it, really: *Painting With* is as close to conventional pop as Animal Collective have come.

This should come as a relief to anyone turned off by their last album, 2012's *Centipede Hz*, which veered away from the lush tropical vistas of their 2009 high-water mark, *Merriweather Post Pavilion*, to reveal a



New Albums

Animal Collective (from left, Noah "Panda Bear" Lennox, Brian "Geologist" Weitz, Dave "Avey Tare" Portner)

gnarly and unvarnished side to the band. Bristling with restless energy and almost deliberately perverse, *Centipede Hz* seemed to ask questions of those new fans seduced by the charming psychedelia of *Merriweather...*, perhaps warning admirers that Animal Collective are not just here for the blissful moments in life. One only has to peruse their 15-year discography to hear them evolve with each release, shapeshifting into a slightly different entity, seldom repeating themselves as they look for new ways and forms of expression.

But *Painting With* is striking because it manages to distill the essence of Animal Collective into 12 slices of bite-size psych-pop that have the punchy immediacy of a Ramones album and which find Dave Portner (Avey Tare), Noah Lennox (Panda Bear) and Brian Weitz

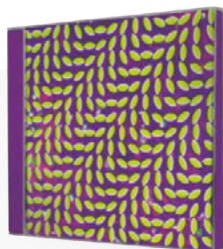
(Geologist) – regular collaborator Josh "Deakin" Dibb sat this album out – adhering fairly strictly to a set of ideas designed to take the group out of their comfort zone. There are no ambient pieces or improv jams, for example, and no songs over five minutes: most zip by in three minutes, into which Animal Collective cram their usual quota of experimentation with heightened cartoon exuberance to make some of the most exciting music of their career. Portner cites old-school hit factory Tin Pan Alley and Ray Davies as influences on his more concise songwriting for *Painting With*, while Lennox felt the Cubist notion of distorting and rearranging reality could be applied to these songs – an obvious idea that's always hovered around Animal Collective, and which they make explicit on this record. Hence opener and lead single "FloriDada", a gurgling *Ren &*

Stimpy eulogy to the Sunshine State stacked with rippling Beach Boys harmony, nursery-rhyme melody and a sample of The Surfaris' classic "Wipe Out". This first new track in four years places the nimble vocal interplay between Portner and Lennox to the fore – the pair wrote parts for each other and recorded the vocals sitting high up on pedestals to better project to one another – and this is repeated across the album on "Hocus Pocus", "Lying In The Grass", "Spilling Guts" and "Summing The Wretch", one singer completing the other's phrase or shadowing the lead in a pacey game of doo-wop ping-pong.

Animal Collective have never had trouble locating their inner child – much of their appeal lies in their ability to conjure a naïve sense of new-age wonder – and their tactical regression this time has fuelled this positive approach to

HOW TO BUY... THE BALTIMORE SHAPE-SHIFTERS ON CD

From blissed-out psych-pop and tie-dyed electronica to sci-fi doo-wop and delirious mind-funk – the recent work of Animal Collective



ANIMAL COLLECTIVE *Merriweather Post Pavilion* DOMINO, 2009

AC's growing pop sensibility coalesces with their tie-dyed electronics on a euphoric record that *Uncut* named as a landmark American album of the century. They suddenly come alive with the syrupy bliss of "Summertime Clothes", as if they'd swapped LSD for MDMA.

10/10



ANIMAL COLLECTIVE *Centipede Hz* DOMINO, 2012

The bad-trip comedown after the lucid E-rush? Not quite, but the delirious Fraggie Rock mind-funk of *Centipede Hz*, which sees AC grappling anxiously with a collection of hyperactive songs. Its psych-punk immediacy is handled with more care on *Painting With*.

6/10



AVEY TARE'S *Slasher Flicks Enter The Slasher House* DOMINO, 2014

Dave "Avey Tare" Portner steps out of the Collective to hook up with ex-Dirty Projector Angel Deradoorian and drummer Jeremy Hyman for a surprisingly straight set of bedroom disco and reverb-smothered pop ("Roses On The Window").

6/10



PANDA BEAR *Panda Bear Meets The Grim Reaper* DOMINO, 2015

Noah Lennox perfects his idiosyncratic sci-fi doo-wop on this sublime fifth solo album that refracts The Beach Boys and Steve Reich through a prism of rainforest psychedelia and gurgling electronics. ...*Grim Reaper* sounds heartbreaking and ecstatic at the same time.

8/10

pop. Naturally, when they entered the storied EastWest Studios in Los Angeles in July last year to record *Painting With* – using the room where *Pet Sounds* took shape – they set up a baby's paddling pool in the studio and projected a loop of dinosaur films on the wall. As with the sessions for *Merriweather*, the three had sent demos and ideas to each other before recordings began, with Lennox and Portner bringing eight songs apiece to the studio. Both artists had toyed with the pop form and explored succinct songwriting on their recent solo albums as Avey Tare's *Slasher Flicks* and, more successfully, Lennox's *Panda Bear Meets The Grim Reaper*, but here it's Portner who delivers the niftiest numbers.

"The Burglars" could be the *Happy Days* theme collapsing down a wormhole: "*When I was young my parents yelled, 'Beware of the ivory man that will steal and sell'*", Portner trills, as a mangled zurna spills over breakbeats before the honeyed chorus kicks in. On the sentimental "Bagels In Kiev" he loosely addresses the

situation in Ukraine – "*These days I'm not so sure who is getting along or if they were before... it's like we can't escape all the noise and violence*", he sings, adding: "*Bagels for everyone, that's the kind of thing you would've wanted*" – as Christmas synths swell to a dreamy crescendo. Both songs clock in well below three minutes yet are so intricately structured, using layers of modular synth patterns, samples and patchwork rhythms, that it takes several listens to register all the activity. That the

SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:** Animal Collective and Sonny DiPerri
Recorded at: Drop Of Sun Studios, Asheville, North Carolina and EastWest Studios, Los Angeles
Mixed at: Gang Recording Studio, Paris
Personnel: Dave Portner (vocals, guitar, electronics, synthesiser, percussion), Noah Lennox (vocals, electronics, synthesiser, percussion), Brian Weitz (electronics), Colin Stetson (saxophone), John Cale (electronics)

band carve clarity out of such chaos merely underlines their psychedelic credentials, and rather shows up fellow lava-lamp botherers such as Tame Impala and UMO as modern-day Totos.

Indeed, submerged in the cosmic funk of "Vertical" is an analogue belch played by one John Cale, while sax man to the stars Colin Stetson appears on "FloriDada", though both turns seem so nuanced you wonder what was actually added, especially when a sample of a trumpet then appears in "Lying In The Grass". Having never found a use for brass on their previous albums, Portner was determined to make room for it here.

The abrupt nature and fizzy disposition of *Painting With* might cause some long-time AC acolytes to splutter on their bong, but why would this extraordinary band want to remake *Merriweather*...? Label them Dada, Cubist or pop art as you wish – each tag fits – but like true postmodernists, Animal Collective are making it up as they go along, and they're never boring.

Q&A

Noah "Panda Bear" Lennox on how Cubism, John Cale and *The Golden Girls* informed the new Animal Collective sound

WHAT WERE YOU looking to do with this record?
 On the most basic level we were trying to do something that was exciting for us, and that's the best you can do, really. You have to let the chips fall where they do after that. We were trying to do something new, and I'm not gonna presuppose that it's new for the universe, but it's something that feels fresh and different.

Setting out, did you give yourselves any guidelines?

We had three ideas that we clung to the whole time. We tried to do something that had really short songs, and we spoke about basic plodding rhythms, and we wanted to do something different – or special – for us with the singing. It's typical for us to throw up a bunch of ideas like, "Yeah, we wanna do something that makes me think of ballet!" But by the time you've finished recording it, it hasn't really turned out that way.

How did you adhere to this idea with the vocals?

For the first time, Dave and I both wrote singing parts for each other to sing, and it had to be that way because of how precise the songs are. The two vocals dance around each other in this weird way, and if you lose one of the voices in the song, it just doesn't work in the same way. Writing music for two voices took a bit of work for both of us. "Lying In The Grass" is a good example of this in one of my songs, and then "FloriDada" or "Vertical" for Dave. For this record, Dave and I had wanted to do nine songs apiece and it ended up being eight apiece, but that turned out to be more than enough. I started writing for the record on January 1 of last year. I spent a month and a half writing and then sent demos to the other guys in late February/March.

How does the album title relate to the music?

In the beginning we didn't have painting as a target but we found, as we were making the record, we were often talking about it in visual terms, often with painting references, like, "This sound feels like a splat of paint", or "I wanna do a part that feels like taking a paintbrush" and putting a colour all over the song. I should say that we don't have a grasp of the more technical side of music so we're often forced to translate ideas in more figurative or visual ways. This time, for whatever reason, we talked about paint a lot. I think we were even going to call the record *Paint* at one point. The Marcel Duchamp stuff is more Dave's thing – the Dada and "FloriDada" connection is pretty direct. I wasn't that knowledgeable about the Dada stuff until talking to these guys about it after the song. My favourite is the Cubist

"We're often forced to translate ideas in more figurative or visual ways"



Painter man: Noah "Panda Bear" Lennox

reference. Cubism often involves a distorted, rearranged version of reality and I feel like a lot of these songs feature elements of traditional songwriting or traditional songform but are kind of rearranged or distorted in funny ways.

What was your brief for John Cale when he joined you in the studio?

There was a sound in "Hocus Pocus" that Brian was playing and we all liked the part but weren't sold on the quality of the sound in terms of how it related to other sounds in the song. Dave's sister was working for John doing live visuals, and the part was kind of like a stringy-type instrument, so we wondered if John would come in and use his viola and recreate the part. That didn't end up working, or we didn't use the viola stuff he did, but he also brought in some electronics, like a sampler and other things, and we tried a whole bunch of things and talked about the song and hung out for half a day. It was super cool. [Cale's contribution appears on "Vertical".]

You invited saxophonist Colin Stetson to play on the record, too, on "FloriDada".

We were into this idea of using an instrument or a quality of a sound that we hadn't found a way to do so before, in a way that we found pleasing. Saxophones – and wind instruments in general – are something we've always found challenging to fit into our music, so it was a fun challenge to do that this time. But we're all big fans

of Colin and like the way he uses his instrument idiosyncratically. He's a good traditional player but he also has a unique way of using the instrument. We knew we wanted this specific part of the song to feature saxophone, so we ran the part and he set up his saxophones, three of four of them – some of them are

really big – and he ripped for an hour. He was looping and playing over it, he did seven or eight layers of stuff. Then we chose bits from that.

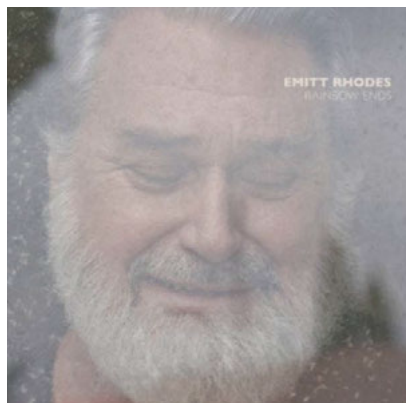
How much did those *Golden Girls* samples cost for "Golden Gal"?

Too much. Yeah, that one stung a little bit but it was an important part of the song, so off we go.

Five figures?

Yeah, in that range.

INTERVIEW: PIERS MARTIN



TRACKLIST

- 1 Dog On A Chain
- 2 If I Knew Then
- 3 If It Isn't So
- 4 This Wall Between Us
- 5 Someone Else
- 6 I Can't Tell My Heart
- 7 Put Some Rhythm To It
- 8 It's All Behind Us Now
- 9 What's A Man To Do
- 10 Friday's Love
- 11 Rainbow Ends

EMITT RHODES

Rainbow Ends

OMNIVORE

Cult American singer-songwriter delivers his first new album in 43 years. *By Rob Hughes*

7/10

IN THE LINER notes of 1973's *Farewell To Paradise*, his third studio album, Emmitt Rhodes sounded like a defeated man. "Someone said something about the world stepping aside when a man knew what he wanted," he wrote, with a tangibly dissolute air. "I've known for some time and the world hasn't made it any easier for me. Those things I cherish most I worked long and paid dearly for." Rather than the usual promotional flam, Rhodes instead appeared to be saying goodbye. As it turned out, he was.

It had all begun so promisingly. He'd signed to A&M in 1966, aged just 16, and fronted baroque-pop combo The Merry-Go-Round, who scored regional hits in LA with "Time Will Show The Wiser" and "Live". By the end of the decade he'd switched to ABC-Dunhill to realise his ambition as a solo artist. Bunkering down in a home studio behind his parents' garage, Rhodes made perfectionist, piano-led pop with a sophistication and melodic beauty

that ranked alongside the best efforts of Randy Newman, Harry Nilsson and Jimmy Webb. Perhaps most of all, his mellow tone and gift for a sweet hook led to frequent comparisons with one of his idols, Paul McCartney. Such plaudits seemed justified when 1970's *Emitt Rhodes* made the US Top 30.

It wasn't long, however, before his troubles started. Signed to a deal that required him to produce a new album every six months – an impossible task for a one-man operation devoted to complex, multi-layered pop music – Rhodes found himself on the wrong end of a six-figure lawsuit from his own record company. The dispute gradually crushed his resolve. After *Farewell To Paradise*, Rhodes went home, shut the door and more or less stayed put for the duration. "I just burned out," he admitted to *Uncut* in 2010.

Rhodes' personal life was in ruins, too. His wife divorced him, and the ensuing decades found him undergoing periodic bouts of depression and suffering from diabetes. There were a couple of

Q&A

Chris Price (Producer)

What did you discover about Emmitt as you got to know him?

He was a brilliant guy but heartbroken. He seemed bitter about the past and as far from a comeback as you could imagine. I don't know if he was inspired, or maybe as I kept showing him music I was working on, but he got back into a musical headspace.

Is *Rainbow Ends* effectively a sequel to 1973's *Farewell To Paradise*?

Musically, it's meant to serve as a "What if Emmitt had kept making albums in the mid-to-late '70s?" I think *Farewell...* gives indications that he would've become one of the AM Gold artists of that era, on the same radio stations as Andrew Gold and 10cc. We didn't try to copy the sound of his early albums, but I wanted to create a continuum.

Do you think Emmitt's started to make peace with his past?

I'm not sure if he ever will, but he's in a much better place than 10 years ago. He's a lot funnier and in better spirits. He enjoys it in his studio again, which is a really big deal and can be very therapeutic. He may realise that pie-in-the-sky dreams are fantasies, but he now knows what's really important.

INTERVIEW: ROB HUGHES

sweet candour, "I'll take the car/I'll take the house/I'll take the kids and then I'll turn you out."

This theme of loneliness and rejection is a recurring motif on *Rainbow Ends*. And if it occasionally lapses into self-pity, there's also a confessional aspect that feels unnervingly candid. On "What's A Man To Do", one of two songs dating from abandoned sessions with a group that included Richard Thompson in 2010, Rhodes baldly states: "I'm feeling empty/Hollow inside/Just so numb/Can't even cry."

The bleak pallor of Rhodes' lyrics is in sharp contrast to the warm complexion of the album's musical settings. These tunes are lacquered with the soft-rock sensibilities of the '70s and '80s, Price and the band creating bright, crisp arrangements with very little flab. This can be seen as a strength and weakness. Lovely songs like "This Wall Between Us" and "Isn't It So" (originally issued in sax-heavy form on 1995 comp *Listen, Listen*) posit Rhodes in his natural habitat: the burnished balladeer making light confections of a

heavy heart. At other times, though, *Rainbow Ends* strays into slightly sappy MOR. What ultimately shines through, despite all the self-admonishment, is Rhodes' apparent willingness to move on, no matter how difficult it may be. The closing title track suggests he's finally begun to open his eyes to the fresh possibilities that life has to offer a man nearing his 66th birthday. Moreover, he's clearly rediscovered his appetite for making music again. And that can only be a good thing.

SLEEVE NOTES

► **Recorded at:** Emmitt Rhodes' home studio, Hawthorne, California
Producer: Chris Price
Personnel includes: Emmitt Rhodes (vocals, acoustic guitar, piano), Chris Price (guitar, organ, harmony vocals), Roger Joseph Manning Jr (piano, mellotron, clavinet, vibraphone, harmony vocals), Jason Falkner, Taylor Locke, Nels Cline (electric guitar), Fernando Perdomo (bass), Joe Seiders (drums, perc), Probyn Gregory (slide guitar, horns), Pat Sansone (acoustic guitar), Aimee Mann, Susanna Hoffs (harmony vocals)

aborted comeback albums, while his flame was kept a-flicker by an appearance on the soundtrack of *The Royal Tenenbaums* and, in 2009, a documentary about his career, *The One Man Beatles*. But it was only in 2013, encouraged by artist/producer Chris Price, that he began to unveil a bunch of new songs that he'd been storing in manila envelopes at home. *Rainbow Ends* is the finished result. Producer Price has brought in a raft of admirers to serve as house band, including ex-Jellyfish duo Roger Joseph Manning Jr and Jason Falkner, and New Pornographers drummer Joe Seiders. There are also cameos from Aimee Mann, Susanna Hoffs, Wilco's Nels Cline and Pat Sansone, plus members of Brian Wilson's backing troupe.

Despite its many-handedness, *Rainbow Ends* is an intensely personal vision. Indeed, it feels more like a companion piece to his great '70s work than it does a postscript. Rhodes often sounds like he's still a broken man – rueful, pained by regret, unable to quite reconcile himself with his past. His heartache appears all too raw, for example, on "Dog On A Chain", a song that has its roots in the late '70s, when he was reeling from divorce. "You ain't no good/I hear her say/Under her breath as she turns away," sings Rhodes, his voice deepened by time, yet retaining its youthful sense of

AtoZ

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

p70 ELTON JOHN

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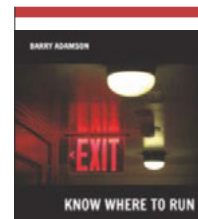
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BARRY ADAMSON
Know Where To Run

CENTRAL CONTROL

More epic soundtracks from cinematic fantasist

7/10

Since his 1989 debut, Magazine's former bassist

has earned a reputation for scores to non-existent films, including 1992's Mercury-nominated *Soul Murder*. His eighth sticks largely to the template: "In Other Worlds" glides from creepy John Carpenter synths to Lalo Schiffrin drama, while "Texas Crash" boasts wild slide guitar and a rhythm section so speedy it slams through the walls of a smoky speakeasy at full tilt. Ventures into vocal realms, however, generate mixed results: "Up In The Air"'s brassy gallop sits courageously between Inspiral Carpets and Gallon Drunk, but "Come Away" merely apes his previous work as a Bad Seed.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



SARAH BLASKO
Eternal Return

MYKA

Musical about-turn for Australian singer-songwriter

7/10

Sarah Blasko has stayed

largely under the radar in the UK but is an awards magnet back home, with a clutch of Arias (the Aussie equivalent of the Brits) and several platinum albums under her belt. Her sixth album, about affairs of the heart, largely abandons the folk textures of her previous work in favour of a glistening blend of pop and electronica. This new direction is best deployed in "I'd Be Lost", a dancefloor-ready number worthy of Donna Summer. Meanwhile, the gentle optimism of "Maybe This Time" is tinged with melancholy, with Blasko's crystalline vocals subtly acknowledging the disappointments to come.

FIONA STURGES



ELTON JOHN

Wonderful Crazy Night CAPITOL/MERCURY

Music legend continues his post-millennium form. *By John Lewis*



7/10

John still actually makes music. The fact is that the last decade and a half has been his most productive spell since the 1970s. We've had two hit musicals (*The Lion King* and *Billy Elliot*) with another on its way (based on the life of a TV evangelist, written with Jake Shears), as well

WHAT WITH ALL the tantrums and tiaras, the chats with Putin, the AIDS foundation, the arts collections and a film biopic currently in development, plenty of tabloid readers might be surprised to discover that Elton

some fine collaborations (an excellent album with Leon Russell, a chart-topping remix collection with hipster DJs Pnau, guest slots with everyone from Eminem and Queens Of The Stone Age to the Scissor Sisters).

And, rather like lots of '70s rock icons who spent most of the 1980s on the skids, Elton's albums since the millennium have been something of a revelation. 2001's *Songs From The West Coast*, 2004's *Peachtree Road* and 2013's *The Diving Board* – each recorded swiftly, in a couple of weeks – saw him rebuild a critical stock that had been devalued by 1980s atrocities such as *Leather Jackets*, *Ice On Fire* and *Jump Up!*. None of Elton's 21st-century LPs have been sonically groundbreaking, but all have managed to recapture the genteel grandeur of his golden age, with tracks like “I Want Love”, “Freaks In Love”,

“Postcards From Richard Nixon” and “A Town Called Jubilee” as good as anything you'd find on, say, *Honky Château*.

Wonderful Crazy Night is his third album recorded with T Bone Burnett. It's tempting to see the Texan as providing Elton with the same career reboot that Rick Rubin gave Johnny Cash, although Burnett's influence has been rather more subtle. Instead of providing Elton with sonic cowboy boots or attempting to prove his worthy Southern soul credentials, Burnett merely nudges Elton towards the kind of instrumentation that suits him – there are touches of pedal steel, accordion and clavinet, while Elton's regular band (featuring longtime guitarist Davey Johnstone and percussionists Nigel Olsson and Ray Cooper) are back for the first time in nearly a decade.

Indeed, for much of the album, there's a poppy ebullience reminiscent of the MTV-friendly '80s Elton. The Bo Diddley-ish boogie stomper “Guilty Pleasure” and the hymnal gospel shuffle “Blue Wonderful” wouldn't sound out of place on *Too Low For Zero* (by far the best of his '80s LPs), nor would the uptempo title track that opens the album. However, with “Wonderful Crazy Night”, instead of glutinous synths we have that churchy, Band-like interplay between Elton's Allen Toussaint-style New Orleans piano and Kim Bullard's Hammond organ. Crucially, Elton's voice is no longer a yappy tenor but has matured into a deep, chugging baritone, which rather suits much of this material.

Part of the reason why rock snobs have always been a bit snotty about Elton is possibly because he doesn't write his own lyrics, thus lacking that “auteur” status. For this reason, the best tracks here are the ones where Bernie Taupin successfully scripts something you can imagine

coming from the singer himself.

It's why some of the best-written hooks here – “In The Name Of You” and “A Good Heart”, both featuring ABBA-like spiky, baroque piano intros – both fall a little flat, because of the rather nondescript lyrics. Much more effective are the two musical metaphors that close the album – “Open Chord” (“*You're an open chord that I could play all day*”) works well, while “Tambourine” is the kind of earworm that Elton John can probably write in his sleep, set off by Davey Johnstone's 12-string guitar riff, a churchy Hammond counter melody and a killer chorus (“*Smack it in the middle/Toss it in the air/I don't care, you can play me anywhere*”).

Taupin has recently developed a fondness for telling historical yarns in song – the last LP had “Oscar Wilde Gets Out”, *Peachtree Road* featured a meditation on Elvis entitled “Porch Swing In Tupelo”, while the Leon Russell collaboration had the moving Civil War fable “Gone To Shiloh”. Here a likeable, accordion-led shuffle called “I've Got 2 Wings” tells the true story of the Elder Utah Smith, the hard-rocking African-American preacher of the 1940s and '50s who was “*the first man of the cloth to plug in a guitar*”. It's as pleasantly languid as Utah Smith's music was feverishly intense.

Sometimes, however, the lyrics are almost an irrelevance. Where his last album – *The Diving Board* – came with four piano instrumentals, here they are segued into the songs. The earworm “Tambourine” is appended by a lovely, stately gospel piano solo, while “Clawhammer” starts and ends with a wonderfully atmospheric, dreamy astral soundscape that bears no resemblance to the actual song. Some of us would be quite happy to hear a whole album of this.

SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:

T Bone Burnett and Elton John
Recorded at: The Village, Los Angeles, summer 2015

Personnel includes:

Elton John (vocals, piano, keyboards), Nigel Olsson (drums), Davey Johnstone (guitar) and Ray Cooper (percussion), Matt Bissonette (bass), Kim Bullard (keyboards), John Mahon (percussion)



BLAUE BLUME

Syzygy
BRILLIANT

Intermittently charming debut by precocious Copenhageners

Blaue Blume take their name from a romantic literary motif, and the

6/10

title of their debut album comes from an astronomical term. Any assumptions that they will therefore tend towards the fey, oblique and precious are entirely accurate. Vocalist Jonas Smith affects a lachrymose trill that is pitched somewhere between the Associates' Billy MacKenzie and the Cocteau Twins' Liz Fraser, and the songs on this album are lush, fragile confections which sound in mourning that they were composed about 30 years too late to be released by the 4AD label in its pomp: "Candy" and "Thinking Of Roxy" are especially pretty.

ANDREW MUELLER



BRAVE TIMBERS

Hope

LITTLE CRACKED RABBIT/GIZEH

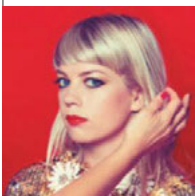
Northern neo-classical duo retain unusually high spirits

As depressing as 2015 sometimes was, Newcastle's Sarah Kemp –

8/10

now joined by a fellow former Lanterns On The Lake member, Andrew Scrogam – appears unscathed, as her second album's title underlines. *Hope* is largely founded on minimal arrangements of piano and violin, the mood soothingly optimistic, their pastoral influences acknowledged by tracks like "Sun Through Leaves", "A Break In The Clouds" and "After The Rain". As with Ólafur Arnalds, the broad, elementary brushstrokes can occasionally become a little cloying, but there's a well-intentioned idealism, reminiscent of Dustin O'Halloran's Emmy-winning *Transparent* soundtrack, to tracks like "First Light".

WYNDHAM WALLACE



BASIA BULAT

Good Advice

SECRET CITY

Morning Jacket required by erstwhile Canadian folkie

Formerly filed under folk, this autoharp-playing Ontarian has undergone a

7/10

substantial musical makeover on her fourth album. Bulat's vibrato-heavy voice remains more coffee house than Coachella, but producer Jim James has reframed her break-up ballads as a series of pop-soul stormers, vintage in influence but contemporary in execution. The updated Spectoresque stomp of "La La Lie" sets the tone. "Fool" and "Time" sound like The Supremes under the spell of Danger Mouse, while "In The Name Of" revisits anthemic '80s tribal pop. Among a handful of minor gems, the title track is particularly ravishing – a bleached, beautiful slice of modern Southern soul.

GRAEME THOMSON



CAVERN OF ANTI-MATTER

Void Beats/Invocation Trex

DUOPHONIC

Stereolab leader amps up the electronics on his new band's second

9/10

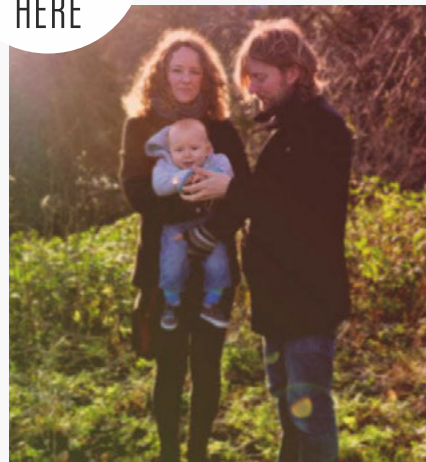
Variety is the theme on Tim

Gane's first widely released LP in six years. A 72-minute epic, Cavern's second is more synth-based than Gane's music has ever been, but due to Joe Dilworth's propulsive drumming and Holger Zapf's synth work, these 12 tracks never stray into stuffiness. "tardis cymbals" is a mighty opener, a mélange of chattering drum machines, organ drones and twinkling guitar, in 7/8 time. "Pantechinon" is an arpeggiated mix of Orbital and John Carpenter, "Hi-Hats Bring The Hiss" takes a doomy, Teutonic path through industrial electro. Bradford Cox and Sonic Boom provide vocals, but the highlights are Cavern's own kinetic instrumentals.

TOM PINNOCK

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Brave Timbers

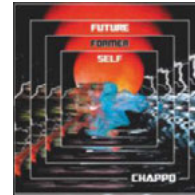


► While much of the clumsily framed 'neo-classical' scene is devoted to music of fragile melancholy, Brave Timbers are more given to optimism. The duo, says founder Sarah Kemp of their second LP, "wanted to make an uplifting album which offered hope and light. That's one reason it's inspired by nature, by taking notice of the little things around us: the wind in the trees, new leaves."

But though *Hope*, like its predecessor *For Every Day You Lost* – recorded solely by Kemp, who these days is joined by partner Andrew Scrogam – suits comparisons with instrumental, acoustic acts like Rachel's and Julia Kent with its emphasis on strings, piano and guitar, it also reflects other, less obvious, influences. "I love Brian Eno's ambient work," Kemp elaborates, "for its quiet beauty and space. I was really inspired by the fact you don't have to have loud thrashing guitars and big choruses to reach and move people."

She also mentions Seefeel's *Quique* – "it's so meditative" – and Harold Budd, because "he unashamedly describes his music as deliberately pretty and the opposite of avant-garde. That's how I hope to make music: without any intellectualising about it, and no pretentiousness." Discreet their music may be, but there are many reasons for *Hope*.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



CHAPPO

Future Former Self

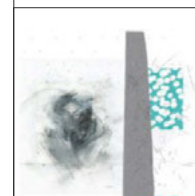
CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL

Paisley-shirted New Yorkers' drivetime second

6/10

Shaggy Brooklyn rockers Chappo have yet to shake their one-hit wonder tag after their likeable early single "Come Home" was used in an iPod Touch advert in 2010. Realistically, that probably won't change with the arrival of second album *Future Former Self*, even though mainman Alex Chappo joins the dots between Tame Impala and The Strokes with no little conviction on "I'm Not Ready" and "Hang On", though he has a tendency to slide towards generic coffee-shop Killers territory ("Mad Magic", "Hey Oh"). This is slick drivetime indie that could use an edge or two to make its mark.

PIERS MARTIN



CHOIR OF YOUNG BELIEVERS

Grasque

GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL

Danish indie-poppers indulge an '80s pop fetish

6/10

COYB mainman Jannis

Noya Makrigiannis is arguably best known for providing "Hollow Talk" as the orchestral-pop theme tune to Scandi-noir drama *The Bridge*, but his project's third album pursues a far more electronic route. The results are suitably polished, but their pleasures are ephemeral, with "Serious Lover" aiming for 21st-century, blue-eyed R&B but instead stirring memories of China Crisis' "Black Man Ray", and the intriguing Biosphere minimalism of "Græske" slumping into excessively Auto-Tuned, Enigma territory. "Does It Look If I Care" is atmospheric coda recalls Massive Attack's "Weather Storm", but too often this sounds like a pragmatic M83.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



CLUB CHEVAL

Discipline

PARLOPHONE

French dance quartet unveil the new sounds of the discothèque

An alliance of four Lille-based producers affiliated with Paris'

7/10

vogueish Bromance label, Club Cheval feel a step removed from the French dance dynasty that begat Daft Punk, Justice, *et al.* In fact, *Discipline* has more in common with *Settle*, the debut LP by UK brothers Disclosure – both are rooted in a sprightly, musical take on house, with slinky R&B vocals as the key ingredient. A honey-voiced Miami vocalist named Rudy is Club Cheval's Sam Smith, bringing a sky-blue falsetto to "Young Rich And Radical" and getting husky over the wallowing drops of "Nothing Can Stop Us Now". For a supergroup, they find their bracket a little too cleanly, but it's not a hard sound to enjoy.

LOUIS PATTISON

AMERICANA



BEST
OF THE
MONTH



FREAKWATER

Scheherazade

BLOODSHOT

8/10

Welcome return of American alt.country veterans

You could never accuse Freakwater of being prolific. Eight albums in 26 years suggests they're a band who only make records when it's absolutely necessary, though, as with most things, that's only half the story. Core members Janet Bean and Catherine Irwin tend to busy themselves with other projects (Bean as a member of Chicago's Eleventh Dream Day, the band she co-founded in 1983, and Irwin as a solo artist of repute, with a cache of famous fans including Randy Newman, Neko Case and Steve Earle), leaving Freakwater on the side for long periods as a consequence.

Chances are *Scheherazade*, their first in over a decade, might never have happened had Irwin and Bean not regrouped for a 20th-anniversary tour of *Feels Like The Third Time* a couple of years back. Inspired to write together again, they repaired to Louisville, Kentucky with a cast of helpers – most notably, Eleventh Dream Day's Jim Elkington and Nick Cave's right-hand man Warren Ellis – to record haunting songs rooted in old-time country, Southern Gothic and humming electric ambience.

The most striking aspect of *Scheherazade* is its sense of languor. The contorted harmonies of Irwin and Bean are key to the sustained mood of standouts "What The People Want", "The Asp And The Albatross" and "Ghost Song", their raw voices lending a suitably un-pretty air to songs that tap into murder-ballad tradition and the mystical realm of Celtic folk. "Falls Of Sleep" sounds like a plea for deliverance from terrible darkness, a sinister place full of puppet masters and changelings. "Down Will Come Baby" invests a nursery rhyme theme with requisite dread, the result sounding like a curious amalgam of Appalachia and avant-rock. Elsewhere, Ellis' fiddle break is a moment of clarity amid the soft acoustic murk of "Number One With A Bullet". Don't expect a follow-up soon, but there's plenty here to nourish the bones for now. **ROB HUGHES**



THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► Inspired by his love of *White Mansions*, 1978's Civil War concept work featuring Waylon Jennings and Eric Clapton, Nashville's go-to producer **Dave Cobb** has crafted

a themed album. *Southern Family* – 10 original songs and two covers – includes Miranda Lambert, Brandy Clark, Shooter Jennings, Jason Isbell, Chris Stapleton and John Paul White. Touching on blues, country, folk and rock, it's due in March on Low Country Sound/Elektra.

Look out for *Going Down In History*, on Bloodshot, the first full-length release in over a decade from **The Waco Brothers**. Led by Mekons' Jon Langford, the country-

punks (pictured left) have adopted "an improvisational and fluid approach", with Wilco/Neko Case engineer/producer Mike Hagler. Bloodshot also have a documentary on rising starlet **Lydia Loveless**. Filmed during the recording of her new album, due later this year, *Who Is Lydia Loveless?* is directed by Gorman Bechard, behind previous films about The Replacements and Hüsker Dü's Grant Hart. Meanwhile, East London's St John At Hackney hosts the inaugural **UK Americana Awards** on February 3. Presented by Bob Harris, with musical direction by Ethan Johns, homegrown nominees include Danny & The Champions Of The World, The Dreaming Spires and Emily Barker. Gretchen Peters, Cale Tyson and Billy Bragg, the recipient of the Trailblazer Award, will perform on the night. **ROB HUGHES**



THE CULT

Hidden City

COOKING VINYL

Lively outing from Astbury and co on album No 10

6/10

Ian Astbury's wolf-child holler is more bark than bite these

days, but he hasn't lost his gift for daffy philosophising – "*Che Guevara in a garbage can*", anyone? – while trusty foil Billy Duffy still knows his way around a monster riff. Though occasionally betraying signs of metal fatigue, mostly *Hidden City* is vibrant fun, the raucous rock defaults ("Dark Energy", "Heathens") interspersed with atmospheric rhythmic excursions ("Dance The Night", "Hinterland"), thundering blues ("GOAT"), voodoo Bo Diddley ("No Love Lost") and, most surprisingly of all, the closing cocktail jazz balladry of "Sound And Fury".

GRAEME THOMSON



DAUGHTER

Not To Disappear

4AD

Dynamic second album pumps up the volume

8/10

Those pining for 4AD's early glory days will welcome London trio

Daughter's return. Like their debut, *Not To Disappear* evokes both the gauzy fragility of Cocteau Twins and the offbeat ingenuity of Kristin Hersh, though this time it cranks up the amps, whether peaking on "How" with a strangely muffled, Sigur Rós conclusion, or stirring up a flurry of echoing guitars and percussive fuzz on "Fossa". Elsewhere, "No Care" seemingly unites Anna Calvi with Suzanne Vega, and though Deerhunter producer Nicolas Vernhes prioritises atmosphere over melody, "Doing The Right Thing"'s brittle melancholy lingers long into the night.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



YVES DE MEY

Drawn With Shadow Pens

SPECTRUM SPOOLS

Tough, live-wire minimal electronica via Antwerp

7/10

Belgian electronics artist Yves De Mey has

released several great albums so far – see, in particular, his 2011 set for the legendary Sandwell District imprint, *Counting Triggers* – but with *Drawn With Shadow Pens*, De Mey has reached a point of maximum clarity. His palette is impressively oppressive – grey-scale noise, distorted beats, radar pulse – but he carves a surprisingly rich set of compositions from this base matter. "Stabbings In Fluid" is an exemplar: a dulled thud slowly prowling the room as drones circle the sky, seemingly constructed from pure electricity. It's like Pan Sonic beaming from the national grid.

JON DALE



LUTHER DICKINSON
Blues & Ballads
 (A Folksinger's Songbook: Volumes I & II)
 NEW WEST

8/10 Low-keyed instant classic from North

Mississippi Allstars singer-guitarist

Luther Dickinson's latest effort to "represent the Memphis underground and the mid-South region's music", *Blues & Ballads* has some of his most captivating performances, notably on "Hurry Up Sunrise", a tribute to Hill Country legend Otha Turner sung with her granddaughter Shardé Thomas; riveting yarn "Moonshine"; the poignant breakup ballad "And It Hurts"; heavy-weather fable "Highwater (Soldier)" and New Orleans syncopated stomper "Bang Bang Lulu", as Dickinson channels Lowell George with the delectably nubby howl of his slide – the album's piquant sweet spot.

BUD SCOPPA



DIIV
Is The Is Are
 CAPTURED TRACKS

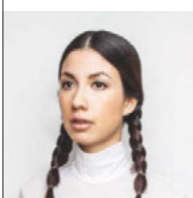
Humdrum, bloated second by Brooklyn's troubled indie darlings

5/10

DIIV's lovely debut *Oshin* sounded as if The Cure's *Disintegration* had survived

a few washing-machine spins with its hooks intact. Following a torrid gestation (drug arrests, hateful trolling), the Brooklyn five-piece's second record resembles an ordinary collection of pebbles – unlike their early sea-washed gems. There are two highlights: "Out Of Mind" slowly accrues foamy intensity, and on "Blue Boredom", frontman Zachary Cole Smith's girlfriend Sky Ferreira brings Kim Gordon-worthy mystery to its hushed squall. Otherwise, it's 17 songs long, and each one plies the same percolating, pouty mood, against which Smith's melancholy voice loses its possibility as a Bernard Sumner-like foil and sinks into the greyscale.

LAURA SNAPES



EMMY THE GREAT
Second Love
 BELLA UNION

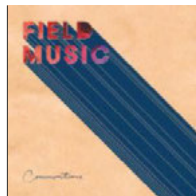
London artist goes on a transatlantic journey of self-discovery

8/10

2011's *Virtue*, the second album by Emmy The Great,

was a devastating deconstruction of the death of a relationship meant to last forever (they were engaged), so perhaps unsurprisingly we find the English singer-songwriter miles away at the start of album three – in LA, and looking forwards not back. Excellent opening song "Swimming Pool" – a warm, dreamy pop song, unlike Emmy's more folky previous work – sets the tone for a clever, entrancing record that approaches new love with caution and, particularly on "Hyperlink" and "Constantly", a fear of technology. The rewards are high and *Second Love* finishes with a triumphant one-two: "Part Of Me" and "Lost In You".

PHIL HEBBLETHWAITE



FIELD MUSIC
Commontime
 MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

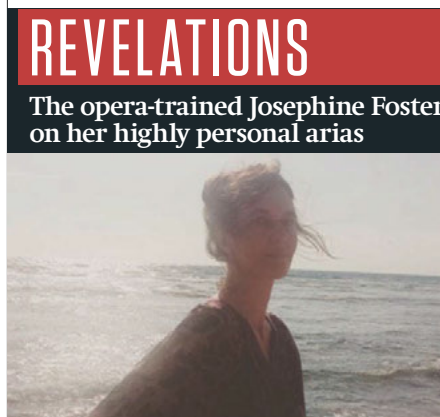
Brewis brothers rock out as dads (mercifully avoiding Dadrock)

8/10

Since their 2005 debut, Sunderland siblings Peter and David Brewis

have been making oddball pop of the sort that tends to get more acclaim than listeners. *Commontime* is their first album since 2012's *Plumb*, which was nominated for the Mercury; and both men have become fathers in the interim. The idiosyncratic chamber-pop on these 14 songs evokes The Kinks, XTC and the more melancholy side of Hot Chip; like much of their past work, it's musically intricate, too. Although they tend to be lumped in with neighbours Maxïmo Park and The Futureheads, at moments Field Music call to mind a Canterbury Scene band transplanted to Tyne & Wear and the present day.

MARCUS O'DAIR



REVELATIONS

The opera-trained Josephine Foster on her highly personal arias

➤ "Making a record feels to me like making a film," says Josephine Foster, discussing *No More Lamps In The Morning*, on which she revisits material from her decade and a half of recording, "creating a special world that I may not return to again. This might be akin to a documentary, live takes of what could have been a recent show or an evening at home," she explains. Opera-trained, she has worked as a singing teacher and funeral singer, but her recording career has been even more eventful, taking in a collaboration with psych rockers The Supposed, and working with the poems of Emily Dickinson and Federico García Lorca, and the songs of Stephen Foster. The minimal settings of *No More Lamps...* emphasise her strong musical bond with her husband Victor Herrero, usually on Portuguese guitar. "Victor is a blessing in my life, he's become my invaluable *compañero*," she says. "I'm more impulsive, he's more methodic and this complement helps me be more myself." The partnership has enabled her to find a new relationship with old material, too. "There are a few songs I longed to recapture, such as 'A Thimbleful Of Milk', or the title track, which feels more natural to sing than a decade before." More than anything, the album is a showcase for her remarkable voice and the journey of discovery that began when opera diva Grace Bumbry told her that her voice, beautiful though it was, wasn't strong enough to tackle opera. "Not long after, my focus shifted towards creating original music – some of my songs I consider highly personal arias – to suit my voice and life, rather than trying to tailor myself to an external structure." GAVIN MARTIN



FLOWERS
Everybody's Dying To Meet You
 FORTUNA POP!

Sweet sophomore sob songs from retro indie classicists

6/10

Some rock historians may berate the C86 indie-pop movement for its prim, infantilised tweeness, but the lo-fi aesthetic it spawned has proved remarkably adaptable and durable. Young London boy-girl trio Flowers are the latest heirs to this evergreen sound, with guitarist Sam Ayres and drummer Jordan Hockley laying down spare guitar-jangling backdrops for Rachel Kenedy's crisp choirgirl vocals. Their second album is a little too comfortable, with wistful guitar-janglers like "Pull My Arm", but adds pleasingly darker shades with the loud-quiet-loud psych-rock "Tammy" and frazzled power ballad "Bathroom Sink", where Kenedy sounds like Nico backed by Phil Spector.

STEPHEN DALTON



JOSEPHINE FOSTER
No More Lamps In The Morning
 FIRE

Colorado adventuress recasts choice cuts from prolific past in stripped-back setting

8/10

These six tracks, recorded live in February 2014, are ripe with the fruits of Foster's extensive explorations. Olde World Americana, trad Spanish and psychedelised lieder colour the emotionally rich palette. With her crystalline guitar and octave-scaling vocal foregrounded, the minimalist accompaniment (husband Victor Herrero on Portuguese acoustic, plus additional cello) lets mystery and wonder guide the poetics. From the giddy, oriental imaginings of her own "The Garden Of Earthly Delights" to the eerie obsession captured in a setting of Rudyard Kipling's "Blue Roses", this is the work of a star-crossed original in full flow.

GAVIN MARTIN



FRØKEDAL
Hold On Dreamer
 PROPELLOR

Grippingly gloomy solo debut

7/10

Anne Lise Frøkedal earned a measure of acclaim fronting the Norwegian indie concern Harrys Gym. On her own, though, Frøkedal – also of the I Was A King collective – favours a more stately approach. Her sonorous voice and the knelling, violin-drenched backing can sometimes recall Nico's contributions to The Velvet Underground, especially on the opening track "WOY". She also offers a beguiling line in gothic folk, as on her songs "Cherry Trees" and "Dream", which seem to suggest a Nordic noir musical of the life of Sandy Denny. Best of all, though, is the gently nightmarish "The Man Who Isn't Here", a sea shanty for the adrift.

ANDREW MUELLER

STEVE MASON

Meet The Humans

DOUBLE SIX

Expansive, “victorious” third from experimental-pop survivor. *By Sharon O’Connell*



7/10

HE MIGHT ARGUE the definition, but Steve Mason’s alternative pop journey of 20-odd years has been a pretty successful one. It’s involved leadership of The Beta Band, who garnered both critical and commercial acclaim (all three of their albums made the UK Top 20), fruitful

association with the DIY-inclined Fence Collective, a string of cultish experimental releases under various solo aliases, and two albums as Steve Mason, for which he hooked up with electronic producers Richard X and Dan Carey.

Productive it may have been, but the singer-songwriter and guitarist’s trip has also been extremely bumpy. In the end, The Beta Band were fabled by the withdrawal of record company favour, shifting popular tastes and plain bad luck. “I always imagined we’d be as big as Radiohead,” Mason said in 2004, “but it hasn’t happened. I don’t know why.” In addition, he battled serious depression for years, while the Betas’ wilfulness also played its part – they famously denounced their first album as “a crock of shit”, turned down lucrative ad offers and, in one rush of blood to the head, blew £4,000 on Velcro suits. When Mason called time on the group after eight years, they were £1.2 million in debt. The title of their last album, *Heroes To Zeros*, spoke volumes.

And yet, Mason has done more than persist. He’s thrived. His third solo album switches track from 2013’s conceptual *Monkey Minds In The Devil’s Time*, an energised genre blend heavy on political content, inspired by his experience of the violent unrest on London streets in 2011. Mason jokily describes *Meet The Humans* as “my reward for the people who stuck with me through *Monkey Minds*... It’s the album they wanted me to make.” In fact, it’s another of his drives for ruthless emotional honesty, couched in variations on a familiar mix of heavily rhythmic piano, quasi-psychedelic guitar, folksy acoustic strumming and loping grooves. But it’s also a bigger, more expansive band sound – filled out with strings, brass and studio trickery – that reflects Mason’s emergence from the isolation of his depression and his enjoyment of a newly positive, more connected life in Brighton, after leaving rural Fife in 2014.

Produced by Elbow’s Craig Potter, clearly an empathetic pair of hands, the album opens with the gently insistent, country-hop grooves of “Water Bored”, which suggests The Charlatans cutting loose in Ibiza. It’s a point of reconnection to the early days of the Betas, when Oasis, The Verve and Ocean Colour Scene dominated the local landscape and “I Know”, from their debut EP, cast them as a Caledonian Stone Roses, albeit more modest and reflective than euphoric. “Alive” follows a similar pattern, adding melodica and simulated sitar, while “Alright” and “Hardly Go Through” lay on the heavy drums, the former gradually adding treated guitar and strings, building to an orchestral sweep that fills the entire song frame, without tipping into bombast.

There’s a change of pace with the sweetly impressionistic “Through My Window” – a demo recorded at Mason’s home in Brighton that he and Potter decided to leave exactly as it was – and “Planet Sizes”, which comes galloping out of the traps, then canters off across a Love-like open plain. As always, Mason’s hushed, tender voice is the

SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:**

Craig Potter

Recorded at: Blue

Print Studios, Salford

Personnel: Steve

Mason (vocals, guitar, piano, bass, drums, percussion, synths, melodica, harpsichord, glockenspiel), Steve Duffield (bass), Greg Nielson (drums), Craig Potter (piano, organ, percussion), Martin Rebelski (piano), Amy Welch, Tory Clarke (violin), Laurie Dempsey (viola), Joshua Lynch (cello), Shane Ryan, Murray Broad (trumpet, flugelhorn), Joe Lunn, Darren Gibson (trombone), Christos Zenios, Helena Hannah-Shelton (sax)

record’s emotional glue, addressing not so much the social conviviality of the title, but more one-on-one relationships and associated issues of trust, forgiveness, loss and dependence. “*I can hardly go through without you/What am I supposed to do without you?*” he entreats in “Hardly Go Through”. But the burden of confession is eased on closing track “Words In My Head”, which echoes Massive Attack’s “Unfinished Sympathy”. “*I love you, in my own way, every day*,” Mason declares, later whispering, “*please don’t ever listen to the things I say*,” over and over.

“I thought it was funny to end an album like this with that line,” the singer admits. “Listener beware” seems to be the message to anyone prone to a strictly literal reading of *Meet The Humans*. There’s no shortage of melancholy here,

but it’s of an understated and universal kind. Crucially, there’s none of the darkness that seeped through so much of Mason’s previous work. As he understands very well, they’re two quite different things.

Q&A

Steve Mason

What was your intent with *Meet The Humans*?

I always try to do something very different from what I’ve done before, but whilst it’s bigger and quite a lot more confident, it’s not that different instrumentation- and production-wise. The difference is more to do with the content. With *Monkey Minds*... I’d done a political album and I just couldn’t do that again.

Your emotional honesty is on its usual full beam.

I’m always striving to have absolutely no barrier between my private thoughts and what goes into a song, onto a record and then out to the public. I think an artist’s job is to be horrifically honest.

What drew you to Craig Potter as producer?

I wanted to go bigger, with a more band-oriented sound, but without getting pompous. I was struck by how enthusiastic he was and how much he’d really listened to the tracks I’d sent him. Every person who’s ever made a record sooner or later wants to make a Phil Spector record, but the trouble with that is the cost of filling the room. I wanted to get a little slice of that, by thinking about strings and brass, etc.

You’ve said that you currently feel “pretty victorious”.

I do. I lived in a version of hell for about 15 years and it was really dark and unpleasant. But I kept fighting through it all and I’ve managed to beat it. The fact that I decided to move to Brighton and leave the woods behind says a lot; I wanted to start living in a place with other human beings. I guess it’s a true story of some kind of redemption.

INTERVIEW: SHARON O’CONNELL



JACK GARRATT *Phase* ISLAND

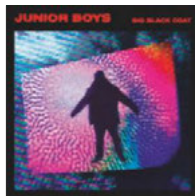
Powerful electro-pop debut from this year's Next Big Thing

This post-Ed Sheeran world has broadened the opportunities for a more

7/10

unlikely type of pop star. Buckinghamshire lad Jack Garratt – proud owner of a statement ginger beard and the Brits Critics' Choice award for 2016 – is such a beneficiary, and his self-written, self-produced debut sparkles with ingenuity. Sonically adventurous, *Phase* is unafraid of chunky choruses, bedroom confessional and twisted synth arrangements. While Garratt names Flying Lotus and Frank Ocean as influences, his voice is pure white-boy soul-pop, his lyrics introspective. It feels fresh and exciting – you can hear rave and R&B, skinny indie and even Aphex Twin here, as on the beautifully weird "Coalesce (Synesthesia, Pt II)".

MARK BENTLEY



JUNIOR BOYS *Big Black Coat* CITY SLANG

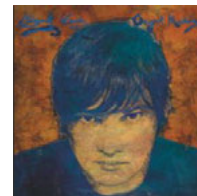
Sad-eyed but fleet-footed Canadian electronic duo return with vigour

Junior Boys' combination of plush tech-house grooves and Jeremy

8/10

Greenspan's melancholy croon can't create the same stir it did when the duo's superb debut single "Birthday/Last Exit" surfaced in 2003. Even so, the group's first in five years betters most efforts by the sad-boy clubbers who've cribbed its moves. Like their fellow Canuck and sometime collaborator Dan Snaith of Caribou, Junior Boys apply a keenly melodic sensibility to a dizzying array of styles. *Big Black Coat* expands the palette further, thanks to steamy flirtations with Chicago footwork on stunning opener "You Say That", '80s house on "M&P" and boudoir R&B on a leftfield cover of Bobby Caldwell's "What You Won't Do For Love".

JASON ANDERSON



CONRAD KEELY *Original Machines* SUPERBALL MUSIC

Trail Of Dead man strikes out alone

A little bit Fugazi, a little bit Rush, Austin's

6/10

...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead are unimpeachably heavy, and co-frontman Conrad Keely's debut solo album – 24 songs plus a 52-page art book – is weighty in more ways than one. "Do those big questions bother you/The ones you thought you'd looked into?" he asks on the typically ponderous "Rays Of The Absolute", while baby-elephant guitar squeals signpost the existential dread on "Your Tide Is Going Out". For all Keely's best intents though, *Original Machines* falls short of genuine enlightenment; simultaneously too much and not enough.

JIM WIRTH



GET WELL SOON *Love* CAROLINE

Fourth album from ambitious German wunderkind

6/10

On 2012's *The Scarlet Beast O'Seven Heads*,

Konstantin Gropper fashioned a cinematic concept about the apocalypse. This time around he's opted for a simpler approach, although the term is relative: as song titles such as "It's A Tender Maze", "It's A Mess" and "It's A Fog" suggest, in Gropper's hands love is not so much a many-splendoured thing as something deeply complex that requires the profoundest psychoanalysis and references to Petrarch. Musically though, the reference points are unashamedly popular, from Simple Minds ("Young Count Falls For Nurse") to the Pet Shop Boys ("It's Love") and Arcade Fire ("Marienbad").

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

The James Hunter Six

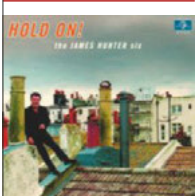


► "My voice? I stole the style and the inflections from a number of artists, from Johnny 'Guitar' Watson to Clyde McPhatter. The rasp is a legacy from my time on the railway, where we relayed information to each other by shouting..."

At 53, and after decades as a working musician, Essex soul brother and former railway signal box mender James Hunter looks like he is ready to become an overnight sensation ("It has been a rather long night, now you mention it," he tells *Uncut*). *Hold On!* is his fourth solo album, but the first to be recorded for stamp-of-quality US soul imprint Daptone. It's a terrific record, with all the warm, old-school vibes and valve-y authenticity of the best '60s R'n'B. Except that it's belted out by a check-shirted geezer from Colchester, the first white Englishman signed to Bosco Mann's prestigious label.

Hunter's talent has been noticed before. In 1994, when billed as Howlin' Wilf & The Vee-Jays, Hunter caught the ear of Van Morrison, who bagsied him as a guest vocalist, both on tour and on 1995's *Days Like This*. "Touring was easy. I met lots of people I wouldn't normally have run into, like the Dalai Lama and Junior Wells, who were quite nice chaps..."

MARK BENTLEY



THE JAMES HUNTER SIX *Hold On!* DAPTONE

Old school rules: Essex fiftysomething's dynamite rhythm and blues

8/10

James Hunter – a former railway signal box mender from Colchester – has the kind of cracked, pure soul voice you'd expect to find on a dusty 78 in an Illinois thrift shop. *Hold On!* is his fourth album, but his first for US retro-soul label Daptone, and it's an absolute belter if you like your R'n'B raw, red-blooded and defiantly vintage. Hunter's powerful, well-schooled rasp makes the Sam Cooke and Ray Charles comparisons clear, though "Baby (Hold On)" and "If That Don't Tell You" bear the imprint of white jazz-blues standard-bearers Mose Allison and, by extension, George Fame. The result is the kind of album you wish Rod Stewart could make.

MARK BENTLEY



KSIĘŻYC *Rabbit Eclipse* PENULTIMATE PRESS

Cavernous psych-folk from Poland

Thank the good offices of Penultimate Press for making this real: if it wasn't for their 2013 reissue of Księżyc's self-titled debut from 1996, *Rabbit Eclipse* may never have been recorded. A sextet from Warsaw, Księżyc write drift-songs that sail outward on clouds of ringing tonality, taking deep lungfuls of breath from frosted air as their melodies gracefully unfold across a bed of rich, sonorous drone. *Rabbit Eclipse* may be reminiscent, fleetingly, of other musics – liturgical chant and plainsong; the lamine abrasions of Organum; the acoustic kosmische of Popol Vuh – but these devotionals, calmly intense, possess their own personality.

JON DALE

9/10



KULA SHAKER *K 2.0* STRANGEFOLK

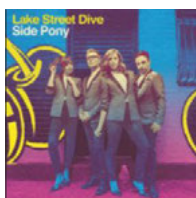
Crispian Mills' Country & Eastern comeback

On Kula Shaker's first album in six years, Crispian Mills and

6/10

co-writer Alonza Bevan seem to be shifting their attention from Indians to cowboys, with a likeable country rocker like "Let Love B (With U)", the Morricone-ish "High Noon" and a piano-driven blues jangle called "Holy Flame" that recalls Nina Simone's "Sinner Man". The cod-mystical lyrics to tracks such as "Infinite Sun" and "Mountain Lifter" suggest that embers of the hippy-dippy sitar rockers survive, but a short, Hare Krishna-style sitar and acoustic guitar chant called "Hari Bol (The Sweetest Sweet)" suggests that dear old Crispian has an awareness of his own ridiculousness.

JOHN LEWIS



LAKE STREET DIVE

Side Pony

NONESUCH

Technically dazzling, emotionally flat major-label debut from touted Boston band

6/10

A band of great promise, due mainly to the vocal prowess of frontwoman Rachael Price, jazz-trained, retro-pop-leaning Lake Street Dive came up short on their previous effort, 2014's *Bad Self Portraits*, which lacked sonic punch. Tapping producer Dave Cobb (Sturgill Simpson, Chris Stapleton), the group have made a record designed to showcase Price's gritty, malleable voice, and her prodigious chops dominate cuts like the disco romp "Call Off Your Dogs" and the soul ballad "Mistakes". While the arrangements are loaded with clever touches, the LP comes off like an exercise in technique, preventing Price from reaching the transcendent moments she's clearly capable of.

BUD SCOPPA



LILY & MADELEINE

Keep It Together

NEW WEST

Return of the Midwestern sister act

These Indianapolis siblings were still at school when they released

7/10

their first album, a self-titled collection that suggested old heads on young shoulders. Three years and two albums later, Lily and Madeleine Jurkiewicz's exquisite harmonies and gentle melodies are still present and correct, though here they venture beyond their initial '70s folk sound. "Not Gonna", "Westfield" and "Hourglass" shimmer with gentle orchestral soul, while the guitar-driven "For The Weak" is both laconic and robust, like Sleater-Kinney without the spikes. The added muscle suits them and you wish there were more of it. Even so, *Keep It Together* is a work of serious, subtle beauty.

FIONA STURGES



LISSIE

My Wild West

COOKING VINYL

Cinematic pop country from Nashville

After a spell in California, Elisabeth Corrin Maurus returns

7/10

to Nashville to reinvent the country pop tradition, with epic, windswept soundscapes that owe more to Elmer Bernstein than Taylor Swift. Lissie's farewell hymn to Tinseltown, "Hollywood", sounds like Adele's "Hello" directed by John Ford, all lonesome piano and timpani, while the anthemic "Daughters" calls to mind a galloping cowgirl upgrade of Florence + The Machine. Often these widescreen productions are more effective at their most minimal: tracks such as "Stay", "Wild West" and "Together And Apart" leave out the drums and bass, and yet manage to sound impossibly huge.

JOHN LEWIS



ARCHY MARSHALL

A New Place 2 Drown

XL

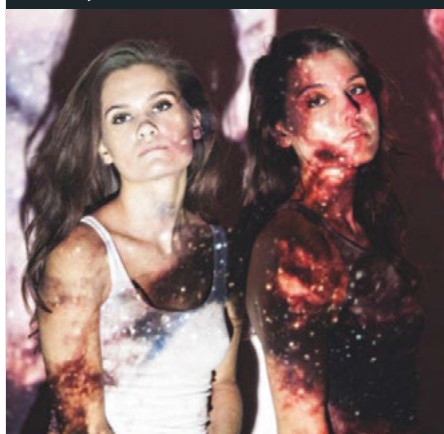
King Krule's murky multimedia offering

Slipped out just before Christmas, there's little in the way of good cheer on this surprise new set from 21-year-old Archy Marshall, whose first significant release since King Krule's *6 Feet Beneath The Moon* sees him burrow deeper into his suburban skater blues. A muggy accompaniment to a photo book by his brother Jack and a short film, *A New Place 2 Drown* is informed by psychedelic US rap, and the scuffed beats and curdled collages conjure a real pea-souper that he cuts through with sharp verses on "Ammi Ammi" and "The Sea Liner Mk I". If this is a window to his world, we can barely see a thing.

PIERS MARTIN

REVELATIONS

Lily & Madeleine – keeping it cool, as sisters and artists



► It's three years since the Indianapolis duo Lily & Madeleine released their folk-tinged debut, written and recorded between lessons at school. Now the Jurkiewicz sisters, who are 18 and 21 respectively, have made some changes with their third LP, *Keep It Together*. Gone is the revolving-door policy of their band – with cellist/guitarist Shannon Hayden and drummer Kate Giefker, they are now a confirmed four-piece.

Also notable is their expanded sound. "Our music has changed over the last year and so have we," explains Lily. "I've been listening to a lot of hip-hop and R&B. We've always been classified alongside acts like The Staves and First Aid Kit. I respect those bands but that style of music isn't true to us any more."

The title of the album is drawn from a line in the opening track, "Not Gonna", and refers to a guiding principle that the pair have followed throughout their career. "It's about keeping it cool, both as artists and sisters. It was hard at the beginning, getting to grips with this musician's life. A lot of our peers thought we were just playing guitars at home and hanging out; they didn't understand the intense time and energy that went into it. But we're used to it now and we're very comfortable with what we do."

FIONA STURGES



MATMOS

Ultimate Care II

THRILL JOCKEY

Washing machine plays starring role in latest conceptual gambit by American electronic duo

Constructed from noises generated by a Whirlpool

7/10

washing machine, *Ultimate Care II* is not the first time Matmos' Drew Daniel and MC Schmidt have exploited the audio potential of non-musical sources – surgical procedures provided the sound library for 2001's *A Chance To Cut Is A Chance To Cure*. But working within unorthodox parameters often brings out the best in the duo – along with the expected passages of metallic *sturm und drang*, other sections are suggestive of watery, Arthur Russell-style mutant-disco and the headiest abstractions of Iannis Xenakis. While the aural palette's novelty value fades by the halfway mark, the final spin cycle provides a thrilling conclusion to this ingenious exercise.

JASON ANDERSON



MIND ENTERPRISES

Idealist

BECAUSE MUSIC

London-accented Afro-disco alliance

This partnership between Anglo-Italian producer

7/10

Salvatore Pincipato from NYC punk-funkers Liquid Liquid is a curious take on Afrobeat. All Fela Kuti's tropes are here – synthetic-sounding electric pianos, muted funk guitar riffs, herky-jerky drumming – but instead of a hectoring Nigerian voice, we get a nerdy-sounding Londoner, singing about waiting up for his girlfriend, being a lover boy and going skating side by side with his love. The detailed electronic miniatures "Confusion" and "Girlfriend" resemble an Africanised take on Hot Chip; while "Chapita" creates a unique brand of hypnotic, astral disco, all juddering kick drums and glistening synths.

JOHN LEWIS



MOUNT MORIAH

How To Dance

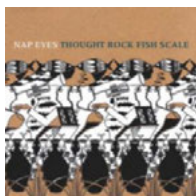
MERGE

North Carolina trio's third album falls slightly short

6/10

The allure of Mount Moriah's music tends to rest in the tension between Southern Baptist tradition and a more expansive form of country-rock. There are plenty of very fine moments here, particularly the lithe "Calvander" and the soulful chug of "Higher Mind", but the formula that worked so beautifully on 2013's *Miracle Temple* is slightly less convincing on this follow-up. While Heather McEntire's wonderful voice is a natural country conduit (abetted by guests Angel Olsen and Mirah Zeitlyn), there's not quite enough around it, her bandmates opting to frame her tones in fairly pedestrian roots-rock settings.

ROB HUGHES



NAP EYES

Thought Rock Fish Scale

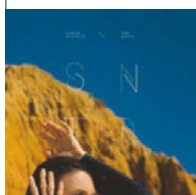
PARADISE OF BACHELORS

Nova Scotians find (more) poetry in the prosaic

7/10

It's easy to imagine Lou Reed's ghost giving Nap Eyes his gruffly benevolent blessing and waving them on their way, impressed by their unvarnished diarising in lean, art-pop songs that channel his spirit, and the similarity of Nigel Chapman's dry, lilting voice. But along with kitchen-sink detail, there's real poignancy in the Canadians' second set, which has excessive drinking less in its sights and more thorny issues of belonging, motivation and trust. The likes of "Lion In Chains" – a "Sweet Jane"-ish rumination about Chapman's hometown – and "Roll It", which deals with accepting what life throws at you, are astutely underplayed, instant charmers.

SHARON O'CONNELL



SARAH NEUFELD

The Ridge

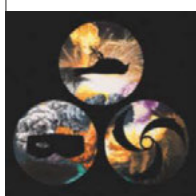
PAPER BAG

Arcade Fire freelancer's second fiddle opus

6/10

A core Arcade Fire member for two of their four albums, Sarah Neufeld remains a touring member of Canada's top pomp-rock turn, but her main focus is now angular violin-prog LPs, with *The Ridge* – featuring fellow Firemen Colin Stetson and Jeremy Gara – her second stand-alone piece. A mildly Enya-fied take on the kind of astringent orchestral punk pumped out by Montreal's Constellation label, it has its moments – "The Glow" falters enigmatically, while "Chase The Bright And Burning" could be a Levellers take on the *Doctor Who* theme. Could, however, be a touch 'Vanessa Mae' for the cool kids.

JIM WIRTH



NEVERMEN

Nevermen

IPECAC

Rudderless avant-rap collaboration

Eight years in the making, *Nevermen* documents a studio collaboration between

5/10

Tunde Adebimpe of TV On The Radio, prolific poet-rapper Doseone, and Mike Patton, currently back at the helm of '90s rockers Faith No More. They describe the project as "a leaderless trio" and perhaps this is the root of its problems, as this is the sound of three undeniably talented men following whatever weird whim presents itself. Occasional moments, such as the curdled lounge moves of "Tough Towns", are diverting. But a reliance on rabbit non-sequiters, plus a tendency to change genre every 11 seconds, makes the point of it all rather hard to grasp.

LOUIS PATTISON



NIGHT BEATS

Who Sold My Generation

HEAVENLY

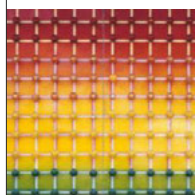
Wicked garage blues from impressive US trio

Seattle three-piece Night Beats swoop into *Who Sold My Generation* oozing

8/10

confidence on the statement-setting opener "Celebration #1", and then really hit their stride on the spooky "Right/Wrong" and deranged blues of "No Cops". There are traces of Black Lips and JSBX, but Night Beats really take their lead from *Nuggets*, something epitomised by West Coast rocker "Shangri-Lah", rockabilly rumble "Bad Love" and Tex-Mex "Porque Manana". But this isn't quite a straight-out party album. "Sunday Mourning" and "Last Train To Jordan" are more complex, chewy jams, and the album ends on the splendid "Egypt Berry", a Casbah-inflected stomper that has a Pixies-like intensity.

PETER WATTS



NONKEEN

The Gamble

R&S

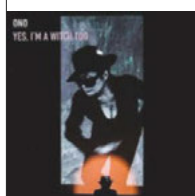
Kids' play from Nils Frahm's childhood pals

Nils Frahm's classical approach to electronic composition has won

6/10

the Hamburg pianist scores of admirers, and his sleight of hand can be felt on this engaging album by Nonkeen, a trio comprising Frahm and his childhood friends Frederic Gmeiner and Sebastian Singwald, who met in 1989, aged six and seven, and remained in touch. A blend of youthful recordings and more recent session work, *The Gamble* mixes light jazz with vegetarian electronica in a non-threatening Four Tet fashion, picking up pace on the slinky "Chasing God Through Palmyra". Tasteful stuff, for sure, but *The Gamble* could take a few more risks.

PIERS MARTIN



YOKO ONO

Yes, I'm A Witch Too

MANIMAL GROUP

More Ono classics reupholstered

The title refers both to Ono's 1974 track "Yes, I'm A Witch", which hit

7/10

back at the abuse levelled at her during her relationship with John Lennon, and also her 2007 remix LP which invited younger artists to rework her songs. This is the sequel to that album and, like its predecessor, it does Ono proud. Most of the artists here, among them Moby, Miike Snow and Cibo Matto, find rich source material at the more melodic end of her catalogue. Penguin Prison ramp up the disco kitsch on her already propulsive "She Gets Down On Her Knees" while Sparks add typically theatrical flourishes to the art-pop of "Give Me Something". Joyous.

FIONA STURGES



ROO PANES

Paperweights

CRC

Emotional second album from fashionable Dorset-born singer-songwriter

7/10

Don't be fooled by his former role as a Burberry model into thinking that there's anything shallow or showy about Panes. His songs drill deep into the human psyche to explore universal troubadour themes of heartbreak, regret and desire. His warm, bucolic voice ranges from dark baritone to an undemonstrative falsetto, underpinned by gentle acoustic guitar, double bass, muted piano and hushed strings that evoke Robert Kirby's timeless arrangements for Nick Drake. Then, just as you begin to wonder if the slow-burn is ever going to ignite, the title track and "I Was Here" take off unexpectedly into ecstatic Van-like climaxes.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



PORCHES

Pool

DOMINO

New York indie darling's bittersweet synthpop

A hipster singer-songwriter searching for new experiences,

7/10

Porches' Aaron Maine is cut from the same sequinned cloth as Perfume Genius and Blood Orange's Dev Hynes – and classy second album *Pool* goes some way to realising his potential. A step up from the meandering DIY lo-fi of his debut *Slow Dance In The Cosmos*, *Pool*'s dozen sweet-natured songs are draped in clean-cut synthpop melodrama, which better suits Maine's earnest delivery and awkward falsetto, more so his Auto-Tuned turns on "Pool" and "Security". On occasion, the chintziness of the production undermines Maine's sentiment, but at least now he's learning to be himself.

PIERS MARTIN



PRINS THOMAS

Principe Del Norte

SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND

Regular Lindström collaborator revives forgotten '90s

electronica genre

7/10

Thomas Moen Hermansen is being mildly disingenuous by suggesting this double album is "different" to previous work. Add a beat, as he does for the final four "remixed" tracks, and it's distinctly Prins Thomasian. But the first five, beat-less tunes effectively recall the "braindance" style – if not the one claimed by Richard D James' Rephlex label – that inspired them, their Tangerine Dream-flavoured oscillators working overtime both to galvanise and mesmerise pre-comedown clubbers. Flashbacks to The Orb's *Adventures Beyond The Ultraworld* and the KLF's *Chill Out* are inevitable, but there are woody hints of early Black Dog on "C", too.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



PROMISE & THE MONSTER

Feed The Fire

BELLA UNION

Murderous melodrama and jingle-jangle mourning from Swedish avant-folk chanteuse

8/10

Taking her recording alias from a children's book, singer-songwriter Billie Lindahl covers a broad stylistic spectrum on her fourth album, from gothic Americana to dreamy psych-folk to Enya-ish abstraction. A blurring of fictionalised murder ballads and heartfelt break-up songs, *Feed The Fire* clothes breathy, emotive vocals in weeping strings, tremolo guitar twangs and ethereal electronica. Citing Nico and Lee Hazlewood as influences, Lindahl's chamber-pop vignettes at times risk vintage-vinyl retro tastefulness. But the urgent gallop "Time Of The Season" and torrid, mariachi-flavoured, Spector-sized "Machines" are attention-grabbing high points on a generally superlative album.

STEPHEN DALTON



QUILT

Plaza

MEXICAN SUMMER

Boston janglers roll back the years – again
Quilt might be a dyed-in-the-wool psych-folk outfit, but their ever-changing moods at least

7/10

give each new album a distinctive character. If the quartet's last set, *Held In Splendor*, radiated ragged positivity, their third, *Plaza*, finds them bedding down with a more cautious and concise approach, doling out neatly stitched Buffalo Springsteen AM gold in the silky form of "Passersby" and "Hissing My Plea" and wisely positioning vocalist Anna Fox Rochinski as the band's main attraction. She weaves affairs of the heart throughout *Plaza*, piercing the glistening sheen of "Roller", for example, with a chorus of "Honey, you've been at my throat about it."

PIERS MARTIN



BONNIE RAITT

Dig In Deep

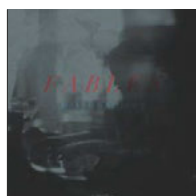
REDWING

Revitalised 66-year-old still setting the standard for soulful female artists

8/10

Slamming covers of Los Lobos' "Shakin' Shakin' Shakes" and INXS' "Need You Tonight" signal Raitt's aggressive attitude on her 20th LP, on which even laidback cuts like Pat McLaughlin's "I Knew" pack a punch. As with 2012's masterful *Slipstream*, *Dig In Deep* emphasises Raitt's sweet spots: Little Feat-style funky workouts, regret-tinged ballads and the banshee howl of her slide guitar. On the fine originals "Unintended Consequence Of Love" and "What You're Doin' To Me", she steamrolls through deep gut grooves with her killer band, paced by the seductive pull of Ricky Fataar's behind-the-beat drumming. Raitt isn't breaking new ground – she's emphatically marking out the turf she's owned for 45 years.

BUD SCOPPA



DAVID RAMIREZ

Fables

THIRTY TIGERS

Underwhelming third outing from Texan troubadour

6/10

Ramirez belongs to the hard-knock school of confessional songwriters, investing his tales with love, despair, faith and conciliation. Produced by Noah Gundersen, *Fables*, for the most part, finds him intoning over moody backdrops of countryish folk, creating desolate ballads in the manner of Cory Branan or a stripped-down Ryan Adams. It's a tactic that works admirably on "Harder To Lie" and "On Your Side", both of which benefit from Greg Leisz's pedal steel. He can also fire up an electric storm when needed, but too often he sounds merely pedestrian, the songs failing to take any meaningful flight.

ROB HUGHES



REVELATIONS

Former Brian Jonestown Massacre singer Miranda Lee Richards

► Darren Grealish's cover art for *Echoes Of The Dreamtime*, depicting Miranda Lee Richards as a cross between a Pre-Raphaelite goddess and a 1960s flower child, tells us much about the aesthetic sensibilities of the LA-based singer and the ethereal nature of her music. Born in San Francisco "between the summer of love and the dawn of disco" to bohemian parents who were underground comics artists and taught her to "Do what you love to do", Richards' solo career has been a slow burn since her 2001 debut proved that the "lack of creative control and meddling" which came with life on a major label was an unsympathetic fit for what The Dandy Warhols' Courtney Taylor-Taylor calls her 'Pixie Fairy Dust Chick Music'. Richards prefers the term "magical heart-world folk rock", a notion enhanced by the copious use of an analogue Space Echo unit. "I remember hearing it used on Pink Floyd albums," she recalls. "It's subtle and beautiful and reflects the album's themes – self-discovery, transformation and grappling with the duality between dark and light, a conversation with the subconscious but influencing our outer realities." After a seven year wait for *Echoes...*, she also reveals that another album, titled *Black Fawn*, is already slated for release later in 2016.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



MIRANDA LEE RICHARDS

Echoes Of The Dreamtime

INVISIBLE HANDS

First album in six years from ex-Brian Jonestown Massacre singer

8/10

Kirk Hammett taught Richards to play guitar, while her husband and BRMC/Dandy Warhols collaborator Rick Parker has produced here; neither fact offers any signpost to the gorgeousness of these lyrical neo-psych meditations on what is only Richards' third solo LP in a 15-year career. "Colours So Fine" rises exultantly from the same canyon as Beachwood Sparks and Jonathan Wilson, "Julian" floats mystically on eastern drones and the ethereal folk of "Already Fine" suggests a West Coast Sandy Denny. Best of all is the LP's cynosure, the seven-minute "First Light Of Winter", which hovers between Joanna Newsom and Stevie Nicks.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



RUNRIG

The Story

RIDGE

14th and final album from Gaelic rockers

Four decades on, Runrig's stadium folk-rock, with its mix of romantic Scottish airs,

6/10

patriotic anthems, highland laments and epic tartan choruses is still in good working order. The warm Caledonian nostalgia is enhanced by the knowledge that we are hearing them for the last time on an album that has been announced as their swansong. Saltires bravely flying, "Onar" and "The Place Where The Rivers Run" pound to the beat of a bold tartan army on the march. "Rise And Fall" and "When The Beauty" are more ethereal, swathed in melancholic Hebridean mists. For sure, Runrig were never particularly hip. But that doesn't mean we won't miss them.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



DAN SARTAIN

Century Plaza

ONE LITTLE INDIAN

Jack White-endorsed, Alabama-bred rockabilly rebel makes convincing electro-noir detour

7/10

With Suicide's spooked primitivism and Depeche Mode's throbbing anguish as blueprints, Sartain's synthesised shock treatment is a compelling segue from his spartan rockin' past. An ominous and sour-tongued ambience abides even on deadpan rabble rousers "Black Party" and "Wipeout Beat". "First Bloods" swivels on a singular orgiastic guitar but the looming atmospheres and minimalism of "Cabrini Green" provide the potent digitised keynote. Negotiating a dark night of the soul with looped sweeteners and prerequisite helpings of vocal angst and drama, the transformation is effective without compromising his primal instincts.

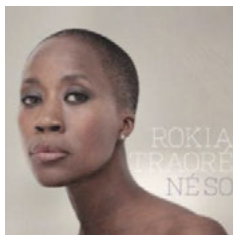
GAVIN MARTIN

ROKIA TRAORÉ

Né So

NONESUCH

Malian pioneer's challenging sixth, drawn from the traumas of war. *By Nigel Williamson*



8/10

IN 2009, WITH her life "falling apart" in the midst of a personal crisis, Rokia Traoré was forced to move back to Mali after several years living in Europe. Three years later, civil war broke out when Islamist extremists overran the northern part of the country,

imposing sharia law. Those events left Traoré traumatised and shocked by what she describes as her own "naivety" – but they have also imbued her sombre but magnificent sixth album, *Né So* (which translates as "Home"), with a tautness, gravity and maturity that makes it her most compelling, complex and purposeful work to date.

That Traoré should come up with such an audacious work, singularly different from any of the other great records to emerge from West Africa in recent years, owes much to the cosmopolitan background and sensibility that sets her apart from her compatriots, most of whom were raised in the centuries-old inherited griot tradition.

Traoré, by contrast, left Mali at the age of two, when her diplomat father was posted abroad, and spent her youth living across several continents as his work dictated, punctuated by regular trips back home to keep her in touch with her tribal roots. Her musical influences were similarly peripatetic, ranging from jazz, blues and French chanson to African styles traditional and contemporary, via Pink Floyd and Dire Straits, whose music she was introduced to by an older brother.

After studying sociology at university in Brussels, she moved back to Bamako but was actively discouraged from becoming a singer by her parents, who did not want her to "waste" her expensive *lycée* education. The patronage of the late Malian guitarist Ali Farka Touré came to her rescue and her debut, *Mouneïssa*, was released on the French Label Bleu in 1998, the first in a series of adventurous recordings that have mined her African heritage in a uniquely individual way, crossing forms and genres and combining traditional balafon, ngoni, and kora with western instrumentation.

Although she made little impact in the domestic West African market, she was instantly lionised by world music audiences in America and Europe. After setting up home in France, her musical journey grew ever more exploratory. Her third album, 2003's *Bowmboï*, featured collaborations with the Kronos Quartet. The follow-up, 2008's *Tchamantché*, was dominated by the sound of her playing a huge, twanging electric Gretsch, which onstage seemed to be almost as big as she was. She also provided the music for Peter Sellars' production of Toni Morrison's stage play, *Desdemona*, and recruited long-time PJ Harvey collaborator John Parish to produce 2013's *Beautiful Africa*.

That collaboration worked so well that Parish has returned to helm *Né So*. Backed by a multi-racial band drawn from Africa and beyond, and including John Paul Jones on bass and mandolin, and



SLEEVE NOTES

➤ **Produced by:** John Parish
Recorded at: Jet Studio, Brussels, and Honorsound, Bristol
Personnel: Rokia Traoré (vocals, guitar), John Parish (guitar, drums), Moïse Ouattara (drums), Matthieu N'guessan (bass), Mamah Diabaté (ngoni), Stefano Pilia (guitar), Rodriguez Vangama (guitar), Reggie Washington (bass), John Paul Jones (bass, mandolin), Devendra Banhart (guitar, vocals), Toni Morrison (vocals)

labelmate Devendra Banhart on guitar and vocals, together they have fashioned an organic but outré African rock LP that sounds entirely *sui generis*.

The opener "Tu Voles" is a souped-up exercise in Afro-French chanson over an insistent, tumbling beat. "Obike", sung in her native Bambara, is a tough, African rocker, the scratchy sound of the four-string African ngoni working in thrilling syncopation with the spacey lead guitar of Stefano Pilia. Elsewhere, the gentle "Kolokani" is a tribute to Traoré's African ancestors, while "Amour, Amour" is oddly reminiscent of PJ Harvey's "This Mess We're In". The first eight tracks find her singing predominantly in her native Bambara and occasionally in French, but the album concludes with a triptych of songs with English lyrics which, despite the sequencing, lie at the core of the record's *raison d'être*. Traoré has successfully tackled Billie Holiday before when she strikingly reinterpreted "The Man I Love" on her fourth LP, but it's a bold

singer who takes on the harrowing "Strange Fruit", which Nina Simone once described as the hardest song in the world to sing. She justifies the decision with a deathless vocal full of a dread and foreboding that seems to stretch from the Jim Crow lynchings of the American South to the brutal beheadings of present-day Islamist extremism. Banhart then joins her on the haunting, semi-spoken title track, while Nobel laureate Toni Morrison benevolently chants the "one world/one destiny/respect" mantra of closer "Se Dan". This isn't "world music" as we have come to understand the term. Brave, challenging and arrestingly original, Traoré may just have gone and made the finest indie-rock album to emerge from arguably the world's most musical continent.

Q&A

Rokia Traoré

You moved back to Mali after living in Europe and almost immediately war broke out. How did that impact on you and your music? It was traumatic. I became aware of how naïve I'd been. And there were other events in my life. Everything was falling apart. It's never easy to go through tough times, but it is also what makes you grow. I realised that I was either going to make it, or add my name to the long list of female artists who ended badly.

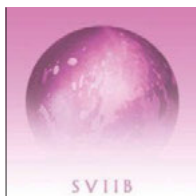
That sounds quite dramatic... *Né So* reminds me of my first album, as I had to start from scratch and reorganise my way of thinking to move forward. But this time, I had the benefit of experience.

When you are older, you can embark on a new adventure without being overwhelmed by fear.

The musicians on the album are drawn from a wide range of cultures, both African and western... I need difference, a mix of cultures around me. It's not my intention to talk about the world on my own. I want to do it as part of a fellowship of people with shared convictions.

And what does John Parish bring as producer? I wanted someone from the rock'n'roll culture to bring me a sound – an artistic producer who could understand my work without wanting to change it.

Which I guess is why *Né So* still sounds distinctively African rather than like a fusion record? Mali is where my roots are. It's where I take refuge. *INTERVIEW: NIGEL WILLIAMSON*



SCHOOL OF SEVEN BELLS SVIIB

FULL TIME HOBBY

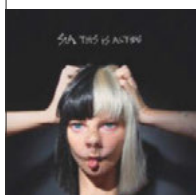
Triumphant epitaph for New York electronic duo

This will be the final album by electro-shoegazers School Of

8/10

Seven Bells. Following the death of their guitarist, Benjamin Curtis, from cancer late in 2013, singer and multi-instrumentalist Alejandra Deheza resolved to finish the album the pair had begun demoing in Brooklyn the previous summer. The result is a typically elegant and – perhaps surprisingly, given the circumstances – uplifting work about affairs of the heart, characterised by Deheza's featherlight vocals and massive washes of synth. While the likes of "On My Heart" and "Music Takes Me" echo the quieter side of Chvrches, "Ablaze" and "A Thousand Times More" are bona fide bangers.

FIONA STURGES



SIA This Is Acting

SONY

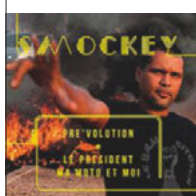
All-star offcuts from huge pop voice

A decade since she guested with Zero 7, Sia Furler is one of pop's most in-demand songwriters,

6/10

and an established star in her own right. *This Is Acting* combines both threads, as Furler fronts the songs she wrote that other artists rejected. The stuttering dancehall of "Cheap Thrills" was intended for Rihanna; "Alive" is an Adele co-write, and it's not hard to see why it didn't make 25: what starts as a bruised survival narrative glitterbombs into overcooked EDM. Although written for disparate voices, a post-dubstep, trop house sound prevails, and Sia's tornado of a voice storms through all 12 of the songs. Where her other albums are more varied, this all-guns-blazing pop portfolio is a touch wearying.

LAURA SNAPES



SMOCKEY Pre'volution: Le President, Ma Moto Et Moi

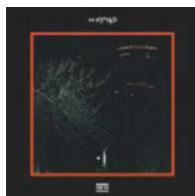
OUT HERE

African hip-hop star whose songs helped to overthrow a dictator

7/10

Burkina Faso took to the streets to demand the removal of the country's despotic ruler, local hip-hop star Smockey provided the militant musical message that urged them on. Mixing hip-hop, reggae and African rhythms, his lyrics are full of insurrectionary wit, nowhere more so than on the savagely hilarious title track as he imagines driving the dictator around the streets on his motorcycle and showing him how ordinary people live. Smockey's studio was firebombed, but it was a small price to pay: the regime was overthrown, making this not just a collection of protest songs, but, quite literally, the soundtrack to a revolution.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



SO PITTED Neo

SUB POP

Ace snotty punk debut with distinctive new-wave twist

A seriously strong debut from So Pitted, a Seattle three-piece

8/10

who make the most of their limited resources by switching instruments, amps and vocal duties while powering through tunes that take in hardcore, punk and new wave. Given their hometown, the band are regularly labelled as grunge – and opener "Cat Scratch" certainly plays that card – but there's a lot more going on here. Tracks such as "Feed Me" and "Woe" have a robotic churn that recall Devo and Pere Ubu, while "Pay Attention To Me" and "No Nuke Country" are typically snotty, snarling and belligerent, but also pack one hell of a swing.

PETER WATTS



SONGS FOR WALTER Songs For Walter

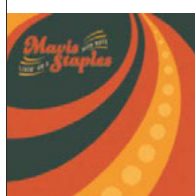
AA RECORDINGS

Mancunian singer-songwriter's familial indie-pop labour of love

7/10

Songs For Walter is a dreamy indie-pop tribute to its author Laurie Hulme's late grandfather, though you can banish all thoughts of St Winifred's School Choir's ode to grandma. For Hulme, this is primarily about storytelling: "Useless" tells of Walter's flirtations with communism in the 1930s, while "Moon/Two Out Of Ten" reflects on his deep distrust of space travel. This is an album that brims with memories and in which death looms large – there's a lot of talk of "the end of the road" – yet the mood is rarely less than uplifting.

FIONA STURGES



MAVIS STAPLES Livin' On A High Note

ANTI-

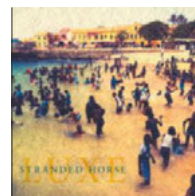
Nick Cave et al pitch in for venerable Staple Singer

Owing much to the input of younger and

8/10

indubitably indie writers, gospel queen Mavis Staples' latter-period works may be a bit *Jools Holland's Annual Hootenanny* for soul purists, but the M Ward-produced *Livin' On A High Note* is a wonderfully chiselled Stax forgery regardless. Featuring new songs from Nick Cave and Bon Iver's Justin Vernon (if no Jeff Tweedy this time), Staples' songs of civil-rights triumphs past acknowledge a still-ongoing march to freedom, while Ward's "Don't Cry", Valerie June's "High Note" and Ben Harper's "Love And Trust" harness the full smoky force of the 76-year-old's voice. Ersatz, maybe, but righteous, too.

JIM WIRTH



STRANDED HORSE Luxe

TALITRES

Classical guitar and kora song from wandering French troubadour

Yann Tambour originally

8/10

hails from Normandy, but his instrument of choice is the kora, a West African lute which suits his singular compositions – curious, slightly fey songs sung in a mix of English and French, which eddy along on waves of dense, fingerpicked melancholia. On *Luxe*, Tambour is backed by an international ensemble including kora expert Boubacar Cissokho, vocalist Eloïse Decazes and a small string section. A cover of Jackson C Frank's "My Name Is Carnival" is enchanting, driven forth on violin scrapes and African percussion. But Tambour can captivate solo too, evinced by the hushed, eight-minute "A Faint Light".

LOUIS PATTISON



DAN STUART WITH TWIN TONES Marlowe's Revenge

CADIZ MUSIC

Terrific, gnarly newbie from ex Green On Red man

He claims the revenge is "against all the nice singer-

8/10

writers out there" and this album's tone suggests Dan Stuart isn't joking. It's the sequel to 2011's *The Deliverance Of Marlowe Billings*, which emerged during his exile in Oaxaca following 15 dark and troubled years. A mix of live recordings and over-dubbed demos made with a grunge-blues/garage-ranchera outfit from Mexico City, it's an agreeably raw listen, typified by the feedback-spattered "Hola Guapa" and Stooges-style "The Whores Above". But with "The Knife" and "Over My Shoulder" Stuart strikes a deeply reflective note, mourning years wasted and conceding that running away is really no solution.

SHARON O'CONNELL



SUNFLOWER BEAN Human Ceremony

FAT POSSUM

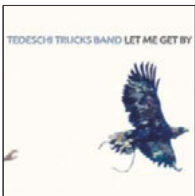
Youthful NY power trio offer a fresh take on poppy psych-rock

Sunflower Bean are barely into their twenties, but they

8/10

are smart enough to know that when it comes to psychedelia, maintaining a sense of wide-eyed wonder is key. Formed in 2013, the trio have already evolved into a fluid, versatile unit, with vocal and instrumental leads swapped seamlessly between guitarist Nick Kivlen and bassist Julia Cumming. "Wall Watcher" and "Space Exploration Disaster" are puppyish psych jams in the same postcode as Pond, but more intriguing are the songs ("Creation Myth", gorgeous current single "Easier Said") that tap into Throwing Muses' vein of chiming offbeat indie-pop, familiar tales of teenage yearning elevated into something glowing and magical.

SAM RICHARDS



TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND

Let Me Get By

FANTASY/CONCORD

7/10

Blue-eyed Southern soul from the husband-and-wife team

Derek Trucks joined a late incarnation of the Allman Brothers as a teenage whiz-kid and, in the last five years, his partnership with wife Susan Tedeschi has won several Grammys in the blues category. But their music rarely sounds like blues: "Let Me Get By" is a fiery funk waltz, "In Every Heart" a 6/8 Stax-style ballad with woozy horns, while the blue-eyed soul of "Crying Over You" segues into a flute-led raga (Trucks is a Hindustani classical aficionado). Best of all is "Right On Time", a New Orleans funereal march that would have made a terrific Amy Winehouse single.

JOHN LEWIS



TRICKY PRESENTS

Skilled Mechanics

FALSE IDOLS

6/10

New guise, same frustrating outcome from former trip-hop great

This collaboration finds Tricky continuing to make peace with his past by inviting his one-time Bristol mentor DJ Milo into the fold and venting some of his childhood trauma on the startling "Boy". But the recovery of his *Maxinquaye* mojo remains tantalisingly out of reach. Once again, flashes of inspiration are undermined by some bizarre decisions. "Beijing To Berlin", featuring Chinese rapper Ivy, is the best thing Tricky's done in years; conversely, a bare-bones cover of Stone Sour's "Bother" sung by drummer Luke Harris is as pointless as that sounds. Elsewhere, the seething mood is familiar but the cursory electro beats offer little of the grimy richness of primetime Tricky.

SAM RICHARDS



TUFF LOVE

Resort

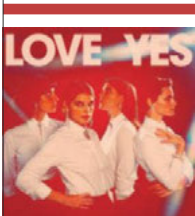
LOST MAP

8/10

Breathless bubblegum grunge from Glasgow Conjuring up memories of assorted shambolic indie acts of the 1980s, Glasgow-based Tuff

Love are fronted by guitarist Julie Eisenstein and bassist Suse Bear. Both sing in slight, breathy, whispered harmonies that are often incomprehensible, something that only adds to the sense of hesitant teen-pop excitement. The grungey angularity of tracks like "Poncho" and "Sweet Discontent" recall the Pixies, the woozy guitars on "Copper" suggest Throwing Muses. Often, however, it's the catchy, heads-down belters that win you over – "That's Right" mangles together a punky guitar riff, a minor-key verse and a major-key chorus to create 2'25 of pop perfection.

JOHN LEWIS



TEEN

Love Yes

CARPARK

8/10

Brooklyn quartet's radiant, experimental pop third

It seems the follow-up to 2014's *The Way And Color* – where Teen

took their kaleidoscopic pop down a more experimental path – initially saw songwriter, lead singer and multi-instrumentalist Kristina Lieberman in a creative slump. You'd never guess. *Love Yes* is a dazzling electronic set that throbs with energy and emits a sensual glow befitting its focus on love, desire and sexuality. Inspiration abounds: "Another Man's Woman" is TLC blasting "Orinoco Flow" into deep space; "Animal" lays a neurotic keyboard riff over a psychedelic raga. But Lizzie Lieberman's "Please" is divinely tender. "Talk to me," she pleads, while synths swoop and a braid of hushed vocals is wrapped around her.

SHARON O'CONNELL

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Treetop Flyers



➤ When Treetop Flyers' drummer and vocalist Tomer Danan is asked what influences the London band, it's no great surprise that he first says, "Great production – that can't be discounted." *Palomino*, the band's second album, is a fittingly great-sounding record, with the band magically tight and melodically assured as they play songs bathed in an evocative '70s West Coast glow, while drawing on other influences including outlaw country, soul and Nigerian psych.

What's all the more impressive is that it was recorded when the band were beset by death, divorce and departure. While this informs the album, *Palomino* is never depressing. "We try to frame those experiences as something more universal with a dash of hope, because nothing stays the same," says Danan.

The impressively rounded work is a result of a democratic songwriting process and hard work. "This album was written by everyone, no one person has a heavier hand in it than any other," says Danan, who also explains their careful preparation. "We prepared quite heavily for the studio. We want to have the live feel as tight as we could so we could concentrate on the groove and vibe. Live performances have helped us to be a tighter band, but so has becoming a tighter group of friends. It's all about being on the same wavelength."

PETER WATTS



TREETOP FLYERS

Palomino

LOOSE

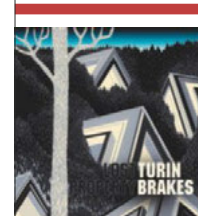
8/10

Lush country harmonies from talented London band

Combining luscious harmonies, charming

melodies and a soft country-rock strum, Treetop Flyers come on like a near-note-perfect CSNY tribute act on this seasoned second album. This London five-piece's ability to sound like a West Coast band from the 1970s is uncanny, but they also write beautiful tunes, which slip down easily despite lyrical themes that include death, divorce and departure. "Sleepless Nights" is an early charmer, rich in '70s folk-rock harmonies, while "It's A Shame" has more of a soul feel and "31 Years" whirls round a Band-like organ. Much to admire, even when the provenance is so blatant.

PETER WATTS



TURIN BRAKES

Lost Property

COOKING VINYL

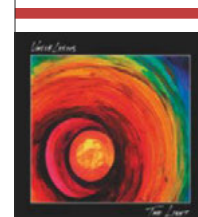
7/10

Satisfying seventh album from shape-shifting South London troubadours

Turin Brakes make no attempt to fix what isn't

broken, honing their melodic, acoustic-based forays into rootsy genres. The hushed loveliness of "Martini" and the woozy, bluesy rock of "Hope We Make It" typify what Olly Knights and co do best, though there's room for the occasional curveball. "Brighter Than The Dark" is a shape-shifting blend of folk, blues and jazz, featuring a magnificent string figure and harmonies worthy of CSN. The gospel-pop of "Save You" is built to be belted out by Adele or Sam Smith, while "Jump Start", with its echoes of Tom Petty, suggests they have one eye on America.

GRAEME THOMSON



UNCLE LUCIUS

The Light

BOO CLAP/THIRTY TIGERS

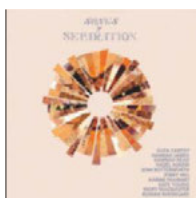
7/10

Savvy Southern rock on fourth album from Austin quintet

You walk into a Texas honky-tonk, hot and tired from the road, order a

bottle of Lone Star and Uncle Lucius are playing in the back room. At least that's the fantasy conjured by their rollicking barrelhouse rhythms, Allmans-style duelling guitars, Black Keys swagger, ripe country-rock and Kevin Galloway's muscular, sand-blasted vocals. Listen more closely and there's a razor-sharp songwriting sensibility at work, too, at its most impressive on the album's cornerstone track "Taking In The View", a biblical narrative for our times, in which the devil's selling off hell to the highest bidder and Jesus has retired with "a stack of classic vinyl and a turntable".

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Songs Of Separation

NAVIGATOR

Feminine folk summit hits the heights

8/10

In June 2015, 10 British female folk artists were cast away on the Hebridean Isle Of Eigg for a week to record a collective album of traditional songs on the theme of 'separation'. On Eliza Carthy's lovely "Cleaning The Stones" and Karine Polwart's affecting "Echo Mocks The Corncrake", a single voice takes the lead over some wonderfully nimble acoustic ensemble playing. On "Unst Boat Song" and "Sad The Climbing", the richness of the massed female harmonies provides the thrills. Such a project might easily have ended up sounding worthy and precious – but the sisterly *joie de vivre* marks out *Songs Of Separation* as a very special record indeed.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



THE WAVE PICTURES

A Season In Hull

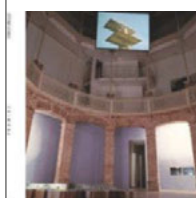
WYMESWOLD

David Tattersall and co go acoustic on lo-fi gem

8/10

Despite the quirky backstory of this vinyl-only release – hastily written songs recorded acoustically using just one microphone, all on frontman David Tattersall's birthday last year – what's surprising about the Leicestershire trio's latest is how well it matches up to their previous amped-up triumphs. "Slick Black River From The Rain" is a close cousin to the swampy "All My Friends", from 2013's *City Forgiveness*, complete with Tattersall's wonderfully wry lyrics and lithe guitar breaks – just here unamplified – while "Thin Lizzy Live And Dangerous" and the shuffling "Remains" are at once moving and hilarious ("I love you, you idiot," goes the chorus of the former). Another reliably excellent offering.

TOM PINNOCK



EMILY WELLS

Promise

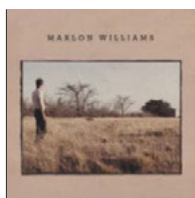
THESES & INSTINCT

High-concept confessionals from Texan multi-instrumentalist

7/10

Emily Wells is a high-functioning composer, arranger and multi-instrumentalist, and this fourth album is beguiling. A fusion of arcing synths, lugubrious grooves and shrill confessionals, it belongs next to the Cocteau's, PJ Harvey and Julia Holter in your baroque-pop playlist. This "pauper's opera" – released via her own Theses & Instinct label – examines loss, remorse and regret, apparently influenced by the German Tanztheater of modern dance and its choreographer Pina Bausch. Cinematic in scope, ruthlessly ambitious in execution, this is not easy listening, but its snake-paced tempos work brilliantly on "Fallin' In On It" and the Lorde-ish goth-pop of "Pack Of Nobodies".

MARK BENTLEY



MARLON WILLIAMS

Marlon Williams

DEAD OCEANS

Antipodean tunesmith's fine solo first

7/10

Highly successful in New Zealand, Marlon Williams emerged from Lyttleton's fertile alt.country/folk scene, which has also delivered Nadia Reid, Aldous Harding and Delaney Davidson. His solo debut respects the US traditions that nourish him while reflecting his own history – a choirboy turned classical music student, who played in a country band on weekends. Williams' vocal and writing range is impressive, his judgement spot-on, whether tenderising the barroom ballad "Lonely Side Of Her" or tackling the traditional "When I Was A Young Girl". The noir-ish "I'm Lost Without You" is a highlight – Roy Orbison with cinematic strings and a synth, tilting at Shirley Bassey's cover of "I (Who Have Nothing)".

SHARON O'CONNELL

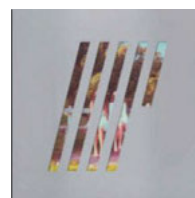
I'M
NEW
HERE

Marlon Williams



➤ "I eventually came to the realisation that I didn't have the discipline for that kind of singing," explains 25-year-old Marlon Williams of his decision to quit his university choral studies and pursue the country-folk/blues path that has turned him into an award-winning New Zealand star (now living in Melbourne) who supported Lucinda Williams on her recent Australian dates. "It wasn't like I just put down the choir book and picked up the guitar; I'd been playing in bands pretty much as long as I'd been singing."

Williams has an effortlessly expressive voice that recalls Roy Orbison one minute, Nina Simone the next. He credits membership of a cathedral choir during his high-school years for the refinement, but says, "It was really singing on the marae [Maori meeting grounds] as a child that put the spirit in me." As to what led him to cover "When I Was A Young Girl" on his debut LP without altering the lyrics: "I heard Barbara Dane singing it and it just floored me. I couldn't believe that voice was coming out of a little white girl and it made me think, 'It's believable coming from her; what if a dude was singing it?' All performers love the challenge of fooling their audience, be it through gender inversion or ironic Britney Spears covers." SHARON O'CONNELL



STEVEN WILSON

4 1/2

KSCOPE

English prog epics, ballads and thrash

7/10

Wilson is best known as the leading light in contemporary prog-rockers Porcupine Tree, and this half-hour-long mini-album is a fair smörgåsbord of his material, bookended by two nine-and-a-half-minute Genesis-like epics that swing between several styles. The instrumentals are the highlights: the slow-building "Vermillioncore" starts off like an offcut from Miles' *In A Silent Way* before mutating into grinding thrash rock; "Sunday Rain Sets In" is a ballad that explores the "James Bond chord" (minor ninth with major seventh), while "Year Of The Plague" mixes a Davy Graham claw-hammer guitar with a sighing violin line.

JOHN LEWIS



WOLFMOOTHER

Victorious

UNIVERSAL

Aussie stoner-rock riffhounds deliver fist-punching fourth

7/10

Despite their live might, on record Wolfmother have never quite matched their 2005 self-titled debut. Andrew Stockdale's mob have subsequently experienced shifting lineup changes, but their commitment to the power of the riff remains undimmed, and *Victorious* positively growls with big-bastard guitar lines, which recall much quoted influences (Zep, Sabs) alongside rock's dimmer-lit corners (Blue Cheer, Steppenwolf). Produced by Grammy-magnet Brendan O'Brien (Pearl Jam, Springsteen, AC/DC, Mastodon), this is bustling rock'n'roll that doesn't think too hard about much else. The title track and "Gypsy Caravan" are highlights, those adenoidal vocals cutting through the heads-down, hair-flying production.

MARK BENTLEY



WORKING FOR A NUCLEAR FREE CITY

What Do People Do All Day?

MELODIC

Rich comeback by genre-mashing Manc soundscapers

8/10

A living tribute to the kaleidoscopic electro-rock eclecticism that fuelled Manchester music's much-mythologised goldrush years, Working For A Nuclear Free City sound re-energised both sonically and melodically following a five-year sabbatical filled with solo projects. Their fourth studio album contains futuristic Afro-funk jams, sinewy Krautrock grooves, blasts of shoegaze fuzz and vintage psych-pop, plus the bittersweet Beatlish ballad "Stop Everything" and a majestic, ambient instrumental called "Leaving", which owes as much to Mahler as Eno. The musical richness and genre-blending confidence adds up to a quietly great album.

STEPHEN DALTON

RANGDA

The Heretic's Bargain

DRAG CITY

Groove, improv and duelling guitars on cracking third album from underground collaborators. By Peter Watts



8/10

BEFORE GETTING STARTED on Rangda's music, check out their song titles. "Spiro Agnew", "Mondays Are Free At The Hermetic Museum" and, best of all, "Hard Times Befall The Door To Door Glass Shard Salesman". They sound a little like

Tom Wolfe book titles, but their witty, surreal flow hints at the pattern of the music itself, while encapsulating the freedom that comes from recording instrumentals: with no singer to accommodate, you can call a song whatever you want and then take it any place you please.

That's pretty much the unifying credo for this guitar-charged trio formed by Ben Chasny and Richard Bishop, and held together by drummer Chris Corsano. These serial collaborators have appeared on around 400 albums between them – Bishop mainly with the experimental, unpredictable Sun City Girls, Chasny with Comets On Fire and as the psychedelic, folky Six Organs Of Admittance, and Corsano on a variety of projects, including collaborations with Björk, Thurston Moore and Jandek. *The Heretic's Bargain* is Rangda's third album since 2010, not bad going for what was perceived as a one-off after their debut, *False Flag*.

Contemplating such heavyweight artists, each an expert in improvisation and occupying that wide border between underground and avant-garde, can be a daunting prospect, but *The Heretic's Bargain* is a groovy, engaging listen, that at various time sounds like Curtis Mayfield, The Who and Ennio Morricone. The focus is the interplay between the twin guitars of Chasny and Bishop, with their contrasting but complementary styles. It's never clear who is leading who as the two guitars buzz around like kittens, chasing and fighting, playful but testing. They sometimes take up the same phrase, hammering repetition with stylistic differences, or veer off in wildly different directions, one taking a solo, the other imaginatively filling the space that the bass or vocal melody would usually occupy. Corsano provides much of the underlying groove that propels the first three surprisingly funky tracks, "To Melt The Moon", "The Sin Eaters" and "Spiro Agnew". The drummer can also play guitar, and wrote riffs for the final track, "Mondays Are Free At The Hermetic Museum", which partly explains why it goes on for nearly 20 minutes.

That's in contrast to the urgent Link Wray riff and rat-a-tat percussion that opens "To Melt The Moon", which then develops into something with plenty of swing, one guitar tight to Corsano's drums, while the other jangles and dangles, dallying with Spaghetti Western themes, surf instrumentals and the North African/Mid-Eastern flourishes that Bishop specialises in. "The Sin Eaters" picks up that thread, building on a rippling lead and big desert rock chords. Again, it sounds like a psychedelic Western theme – Bishop's brother has one of the



SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by: Rangda
Recorded at: Black Dirt Studio, New York
Personnel: Ben Chasny (guitar), Richard Bishop (guitar), Chris Corsano (drums)

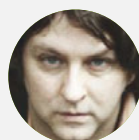
world's largest collections of Morricone soundtracks on vinyl, and that's all over this record – before an aggressive, squally solo, reminiscent of Chasny's work with Comets On Fire, closes things out after less than three minutes. "Spiro Agnew" is equally brief, a cheery march that sees guitarists switch between rhythm and lead a couple of times before they fall into step with each other, together but slightly out of time, with deliriously blurred effect.

After this relatively straightforward opening, the record takes an oblique turn. "Hard Times Befall The Door To Door Glass Shard Salesman" begins with a sludgy cacophony of feedback, like an avant-garde orchestra of angry cats, and maintains that for five minutes of shrieking chaos, until a slow

burble of tune is picked out against a becalming billow of drums. Then just when you think a song is about to break out, it abruptly finishes. Or more precisely, it folds into "Mondays Are Free At The Hermetic Museum". This 19-minute epic begins with glacial feedback and drone, before sparring guitars quiver and bat volleys of notes around, each phrase punctuated by a power chord redolent of Pete Townshend. From there, the track combines the funk of the opening three tracks with something heavier, fat layers of metal chords meeting thundering drums and shredding solos shrouded in a psychedelic haze. And through it all flutter little flurries of sustaining rhythms, like a Greek wedding during a tornado with two master guitarists leading the dance.

Q&A

Ben Chasny



How do you all decide it's time to get together? We sit around until somebody calls somebody else and says let's do a record. We recorded this last January.

Everybody writes at home and then we go to Chris' house and write for a week together, then we tour that material to see what improvisation works. Then we go to Jason [Meagher's] studio at the end of the tour and put it down. On this one, Chris wrote a lot of the guitar work, that was a new thing. He's a really good guitar player.

Would you agree this is quite a groovy record? It's really interesting, before we made the first

record, that's kind of what I thought the band would sound like. But that first record was very out-there, a lot of improvisation, quite noisy. The groove comes from Chris' drumming, he's very free and has a really funky sense. It was a lot of fun because I don't have any projects that are funky in the least.

How do you and Rick complement each other? His style is different, even when we are playing the same riff, so I have to get up to his speed and style and that's really good for me. I do a lot of hammer-ons and pull-offs, but he picks every note with that flamenco style.

Who writes the song titles? I have nothing to do with it. Chris and Rick start an email thread, bouncing ideas as it gets more and more outrageous and funny, until they have to scale it back to something less ridiculous while I just sit and watch. INTERVIEW: PETER WATTS

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ATV

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10 Masterpiece

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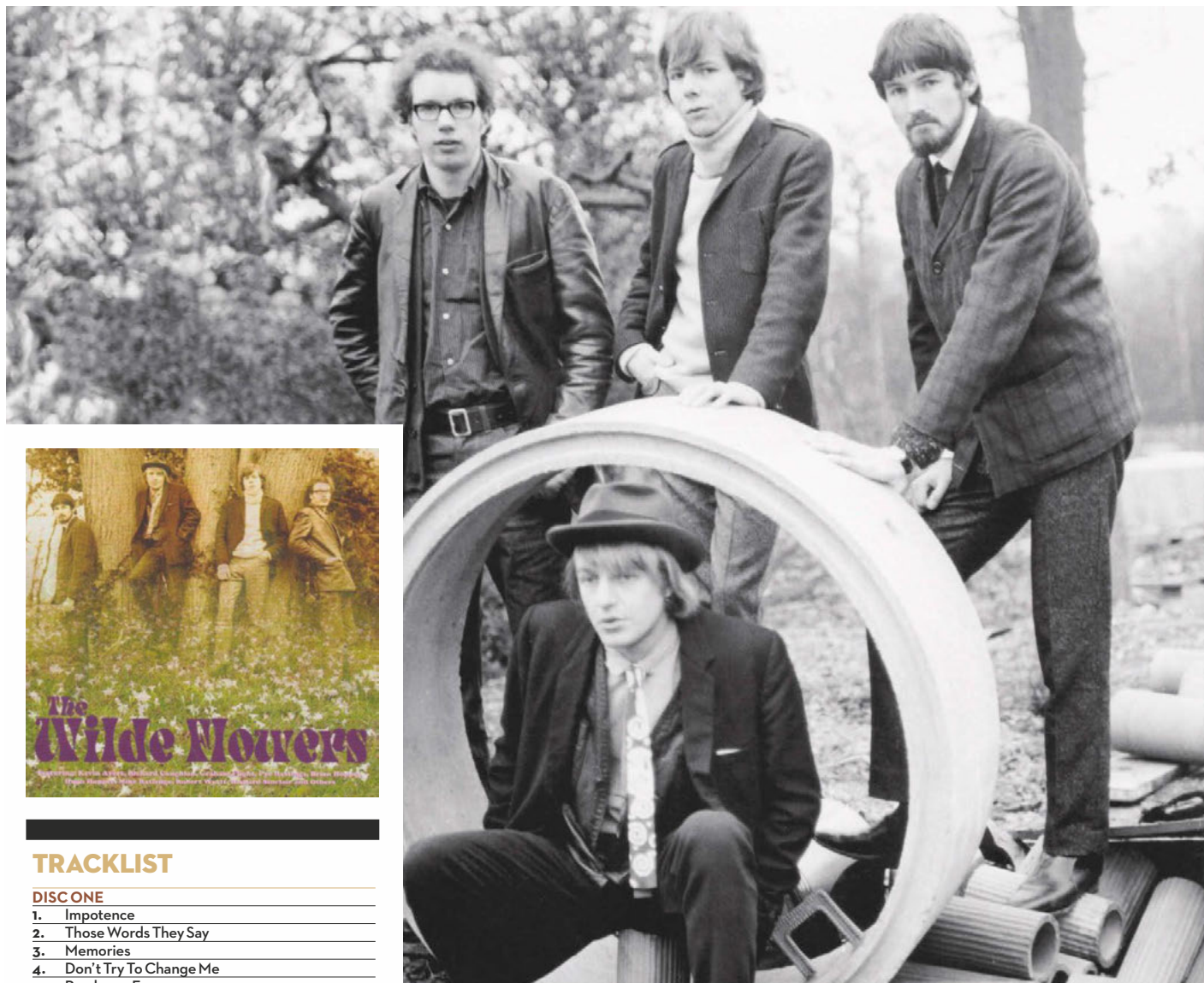
SCORING: EXTRAMATERIAL

10 Untold riches

1 Barrel-scrappings

Archive

REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



TRACKLIST

DISC ONE

1. Impotence
2. Those Words They Say
3. Memories
4. Don't Try To Change Me
5. Parchman Farm
6. Almost Grown
7. She's Gone
8. Slow Walkin' Talk, Pt 1
9. He's Bad For You
10. It's What I Feel (A Certain Kind)
11. Memories (Instrumental)
12. Never Leave Me
13. Time After Time
14. Just Where I Want
15. No Game When You Lose
16. Impotence (alt version)
17. Why Do You Care
18. The Pie Man Cometh
19. Summer Spirit
20. She Loves to Hurt
21. The Big Show
22. Memories (alt version)

DISC TWO

1. The Pie Man Cometh
1. Mummie
3. That's Alright Mama
4. Orientasian
5. Frenetia
6. 3/4 Blues Thing in F
7. Slow Walkin' Talk, Pt 2
8. Man In A Deaf Corner
9. Summertime
10. Belzied Parked
11. Where But For Caravan Would I?
12. Hope For Happiness

THE WILDE FLOWERS

The Wilde Flowers

FLOATING WORLD

Exhaustive round-up of Robert Wyatt and Kevin Ayers' Canterbury Scene precursors. *By Tom Pinnock*

8/10 TAKE ALMOST ANY iconic British musician of the late '60s or early '70s, and a failed group lurks in their past. Bryan Ferry had the Gas Board, for example, and David Gilmour his Jokers Wild; even David Bowie tried his hand in The Lower Third, The Konrads and The King Bees.

One such group, though, The Wilde Flowers, who floundered quietly in Canterbury in the mid-'60s, not only spawned a whole batch of England's finest songwriters and musicians,

but an entire movement – the Canterbury Scene, made up of jazz-tinged, psychedelically playful outfits such as Soft Machine, Caravan, Matching Mole and Hatfield And The North, and solo artists such as Robert Wyatt and Kevin Ayers. During their existence from 1964 to '69, The Wilde Flowers were heard by very few. They released no songs, and received little attention outside east Kent, but owing to their members' later successes, what they did record was released as a compilation in 1994. With that record now long out of print, these



The Wilde Flowers 1965/'66 (l-r): Brian Hopper, Robert Wyatt, Richard Coughlan and Hugh Hopper

→ insightful roots of the Canterbury Scene have been remastered and packaged with a second disc of previously unreleased tracks.

The 35 songs here are worthy of propagation in the 21st century primarily because of the band members' leftfield inspirations, relatively unique in the beat/R'n'B scene. Rather than being into the trad jazz that was popular in the late '50s and early '60s – even Pete Townshend and John Entwistle first met in such a group, The Confederates – the Flowers bonded over their passions for the likes of Eric Dolphy, Charles Mingus and Cecil Taylor, just some of the acts introduced to them by Wyatt's half-brother, Mark Ellidge, and Daavid Allen, the Australian Beatnik and future Gong leader who was lodging at Wyatt's parents' house. Inspired by the Beats and free jazz, Allen enlisted Wyatt – who had been taught drums by the Californian jazz player George Neidorf – and his friend Hugh Hopper for the experimental Daavid Allen Trio in 1963, just before The Wilde Flowers formed; a pretty out-there experience for two Canterbury teenagers.

The Flowers' surviving recordings stem from various unearthed sessions, often taped

straight from the acetates by the band's longest-running member Brian Hopper. Robert Wyatt takes lead on most of these, his reedy tones on the early "He's Bad For You" immediately

recognisable as the man who would later create the masterful *Rock Bottom*. Kevin Ayers helms two songs on Disc One: his cover of Booker White's swinging "Parchman Farm" is fun, though hardly essential, but Ayers' own "She's Gone" is much more interesting, its grimy chugging reminiscent of The Velvet Underground's early material. Soon, however, the charismatic frontman would flit to the Balearics, something he seemed to be fond of doing throughout his career whenever anything got too staid.

For a group who all involved admit were primarily a "dance band", the sheer weirdness of some of the cuts here is still a surprise, with "He's Bad For You" predicting the spindly, grey-scale sound of post-punks like The Raincoats. Meanwhile, charged freakbeat cuts

"Those Words They Say" and "No Game When You Lose", both recorded at Wout Steenhuis' Broadstairs studio in early 1966, today recall the work of another Kent maverick, Billy

Childish. Their modal melodies, out-there guitar solos and melancholic moods were at right angles to most mid-'60s British rock acts, but would have fitted well alongside some of the selections on *Nuggets*. Before the dawn of psychedelia, while The Beatles were still singing about paperback writers

and "Tomorrow Never Knows" was yet to be made public, it's hard to imagine songs like these going down well at the sort of gigs The Wilde Flowers played in sleepy Canterbury venues like The Beehive.

Despite these louder highlights, some of The Wilde Flowers' finest songs were their most contemplative. Hugh Hopper's elegiac "Memories" appears three times here in various guises, and in many ways is the ur-text

for the entire Canterbury Scene. The tempo is slow, the beat lightly swinging, as Wyatt's voice flits plaintively above the shifting chords. "*I know I cannot leave this place,*" he sings, "*full of memories... Memories, can hang you up/And haunt you all your life, you know.*" Disc One ends with an alternate version recorded in August 1969, with Soft Machine organist Mike Ratledge supplying

For a group who all admit were a "dance band", the weirdness of some of the cuts here is a surprise

FORGOTTEN FRUIT Four treasures from *The Wilde Flowers*

MEMORIES

1969 VERSION

With The Wilde Flowers themselves a memory, Hugh Hopper's finest song was revisited in the late '60s by Robert Wyatt, Hopper and Mike Ratledge for this moody, despairing take – in many ways, a blueprint for much of Wyatt's subsequent solo career. Kevin Ayers was reportedly even on hand to provide the closing organ notes.

WHERE BUT FOR CARAVAN WOULD I?

Co-written with Brian Hopper, this epic closed Caravan's self-titled debut, released in 1969, but on *The Wilde Flowers*' Disc Two it features in an earlier, murkier-sounding extended version. After three sleepy minutes, the track blossoms into life with a chromatic, menacing riff and two sets of stellar organ soloing from Dave Sinclair.

MAN IN A DEAF CORNER

Written and performed by Brian Hopper, Hugh Hopper, Mike Ratledge and Robert Wyatt back in 1962 or 1963 – effectively Soft Machine's Mark II lineup six years early – this is a shockingly advanced free jazz piece, and bizarrely similar to some of the material that Soft Machine would perform as the '60s came to a close.

HOPE FOR HAPPINESS

2003 VERSION

Though marred by some cheap-sounding keyboard sounds, Robert Wyatt and Brian Hopper's nine-minute, 21st-century take on the opener to Soft Machine's 1968 debut is imbued with a fascinating Eastern vibe that really uncovers the raga-like melodies of the song. Strangely like The Incredible String Band with breakbeats.

skilful, Bill Evans-esque piano. Its funereal mood is strangely not unlike something from Wyatt's last solo album, 2007's *Comicopera*.

Hopper also contributed another highlight to the Flowers' canon, with "Impotence", co-written with Wyatt. Again only captured properly in August 1969 at London's Regent Sound Studios, it's a bouncing, minor-chord delight. "*I can't stand the pain of the tension between your wet eyes and mine,*" wails Wyatt. "*It's like something obscene.*"

Disc Two provides a glimpse into the myriad contemporaneous outlets of the Flowers. "Slow Walkin' Talk" is performed by Robert Wyatt and one of his 'friends' in the US in 1968, most likely Jimi Hendrix, while versions of "The Pieman Cometh" and "Hope For Happiness" date from a 2003 session by Wyatt and Brian Hopper. Most interesting, perhaps, are a number of duo performances from 1962 and '63, featuring Brian Hopper and Wyatt on the experimental "Mummie" and "Orientalian", and Wyatt and Mike Ratledge on "Frenetica", complete with suitably jagged free jazz drums and piano. The pair's take on Gershwin's "Summertime" is also a beautiful miniature, Wyatt restricting himself mostly to cymbals as the tempo bends and warps.

Not long after moving from the drums to take up vocals full-time in 1966, Wyatt would leave the band and hook up with Ayers and Daavid Allen to form Soft Machine. By the middle of 1967, Brian Hopper had left the band to form Zobe (and later become an agricultural scientist), and the rest of the latter-day Flowers, including Pye Hastings on guitar and Richard Coughlan on drums, formed Caravan.

Though the band had ended, their bonds would remain. With Soft Machine on tour in America in 1968, Caravan used their friends' equipment to record their debut, while some of the highlights of the former's debut album were written by Brian Hopper. Meanwhile, his brother Hugh's "Memories" has often been performed by Wyatt, as captured on his 1974 *Theatre Royal, Drury Lane* live album, and by Daavid Allen on 1971's *Banana Moon*, with Wyatt on drums and vocals. Collaborations continued throughout the years, with Hugh Hopper and Wyatt even appearing on Kevin Ayers' final album, 2007's *The Unfairground*. Today, Pye Hastings still leads Caravan, with Richard Coughlan remaining on the drum stool until his death in 2013.

In hindsight, the level of talent involved in The Wilde Flowers never seemed to be their problem – indeed, on the evidence of these two discs, they appeared to suffer from a surfeit of ideas, members and avenues that they wished to explore, leaving their identity perhaps a little too fluid for the casual listeners of the mid-'60s. As they neared the end of their existence, London's countercultural underground exploded, the UFO Club opened and teenagers were suddenly content to sit and listen to melancholic, expansive music – only then would many of the Flowers find their own audiences. Yet, over 50 years on, these seeds of the Canterbury Scene are still worthy of rediscovery.

Wyatt: hop-picker, life model and musical pioneer



Q&A

Robert Wyatt on how The Wilde Flowers blossomed

HOW DID THE Wilde Flowers start out?

It was basically Brian and Hugh [Hopper], who I met at school in Canterbury, where they lived. That was an hour's bus ride from my home, which was near Dover. I'd left home for good by 1962. The Wilde Flowers happened when I was staying in several places in Canterbury, from which I got seasonal work hop-picking, life modelling at the art college, etc.

What part did Daavid Allen play in the development of the group? I understand he introduced you all to a lot of music and art.

Yes, I've read that too. David was a lodger at our near-Dover home in the late '50s. He did indeed have many jazz records, but I'd already been listening to similar ones: my brother Mark's records, added to the music my dad played, and to the music I'd heard abroad while I was still in short trousers. But anyhow, I was an aspiring painter then, if anything.

Why did you all move from jazz to R'n'B? I'm guessing the rise of beat groups was pretty irresistible.

It happened when Brian bought a guitar and started playing Chuck Berry songs. The bridge between being the very danceable 'soul' jazz of Nat and Julian Adderley, and the heroes in London, like Georgie Fame and Zoot Money. If you're curious about the connection between our classic jazz listening and the more widely accessible music that inspired us later, I've heard a whole evening of the kind of records we used to love being played by the actor Martin Freeman in his unexpected role as disc jockey. His choices are totally spot on.

How was it melding your jazz drumming chops to more straightahead material?

The key influence was playing for dancers, with the backbeat you really must not lose.

What were the rehearsals at the Hoppers' home, Tanglewood, like?

A huddle round Mrs Hopper's piano. Hugh and Brian would think of tunes we might try, and some of their own. Though I was behind the drumkit, the brothers were reluctant singers, so I did some of that. Then [rhythmn guitarist] Richard Sinclair and Kevin Ayers came to the rescue.

Kevin must have seemed like a very exotic character when he first appeared in your circles... did he galvanise the group?

He certainly added the 'e' to Wild. For Oscar, of course. I don't recall 'exotic' being a feature of his presence. But he was certainly more laidback than us. I really enjoyed his company, that's for sure.

What were The Wilde Flowers like live?

We got into our stride in a Canterbury club called The Beehive. Lively crowds, steamy atmosphere. We got loud.

You eventually took over the vocals and frontman duties – how did it feel to step away from the drums?

The [Hopper] brothers came across Richard [Coughlan], a good drummer who seemed content to just play drums. This is rarer than you'd think.

What were your recording sessions like? The material from Wout Steenhuis' studio sounds great.

Wout Steenhuis – Dutch, I think – was a successful musician with his own studio. He very kindly allowed us there to try out a few sessions, for demos or just so the songwriters could hear what their songs sounded like before trying them out in public.

Why did the band eventually disintegrate?

They carried on after I'd gone London to join Kevin and Daavid, who were collaborating on songwriting, so I don't know really. Brian was studying to become a scientist, so I suppose that that took over his priorities. He did carry on writing and playing though, which I'm happy about because decades later I got to sing his "The Pieman Cometh", which I really enjoyed doing with him.

Do you have any favourites among The Wilde Flowers' songs?

Hugh's tunes were often unusually haunting. I would say "Memories", perhaps his very first. I've returned to it several times since.

"We got into our stride in Canterbury club, The Beehive. Lively crowds and a steamy atmosphere"

What do you see as the 'classic' Wilde Flowers lineup?

Probably what they did after I left the band! But of the times I was with them, the lineup for 20-odd minutes during which we played "I Put A Spell On You", "Watermelon Man" and a James Brown number, for a surprising win at the Margate Beat Group competition. That was Hugh, Brian and me with, um, Pye Hastings?

INTERVIEW: TOM PINNOCK



BOXSET CONTENTS:

ERIC CLAPTON
LAYLA & OTHER ASSORTED LOVE SONGS
461 OCEAN BOULEVARD
THERE'S ONE IN EVERY CROWD
NO REASON TO CRY
SLOWHAND
BACKLESS
ANOTHER TICKET

ERIC CLAPTON

The Studio Album Collection (1970-1981)

UNIVERSAL

The withdrawal years: Slowhand leaves the blues behind on eight vinyl albums in a box. *By David Cavanagh*

7/10

PICK ANY ONE of the four sides of *Layla & Other Assorted Love Songs*, the 1970 double-

album by Derek & The Dominos, and you'll hear a 25-year-old Eric Clapton wracked with anguish, down on his knees and baring his soul. A howl of unrequited love for Pattie Boyd, the wife of his friend George Harrison, *Layla* remains one of Clapton's greatest works. It's a monolith of blues metaphors, real-time agonies and scorching guitar solos. His way of coping with the pain it unleashed was to retreat to Hurtwood Edge, his villa in Surrey, where he took heroin for two years and never left the house.

It's been suggested that Clapton got so close to the essence of the blues on *Layla* that it did something terminal to his muse. Certainly, his guitar and voice were much changed – more

restrained, not so fearless – when he re-emerged in a Miami studio in 1974. If there's a word that sums up this boxset (a vinyl-only collection of eight albums from 1970 to 1981), it's 'withdrawal'. Withdrawal from heroin. Withdrawal into an alcoholic haze. But withdrawal, too, from the burden and responsibility of being rock's foremost living guitarist, so that the former Cream hero was seen, by the mid-'70s, to mutate into a quite different beast: a leisurely, laidback, south-of-England facsimile of JJ Cale. Watch the first 20 minutes of Clapton's 1977 *Old Grey Whistle Test* special, where he's strumming an acoustic while his American bandmate George Terry takes all the solos, and witness a man once hailed as God reducing himself to the role of a minor apostle.

All the same, more than one of these eight



albums sold millions (for example, *Slowhand* in 1977), and between them they featured some of Clapton's biggest international hits, including "Layla", "I Shot The Sheriff" and "Lay Down Sally". The producers he worked with (Tom Dowd, Glyn Johns, Rob Fraboni) operated at the top end of AOR sophistication, while the musicians in his band – bassist Carl Radle, keyboardist Dick Sims and drummer Jamie Oldaker – were among the best of the American 'feel' players that captivated stars like Rod Stewart, Steve Winwood and The Rolling Stones in the '70s. Radle, Sims and Oldaker were masters of a gentle, rolling, country- and blues-influenced style known as the 'Tulsa sound'. While Rod Stewart's '70s albums with Tom

Dowd struggled with a blandness problem, Clapton's had a Tulsa chemistry and a fleet-footed flexibility, allowing them to explore the sleepy grooves of Cale and the new rhythms of reggae. A song called "High" (on *There's One In Every Crowd*, 1975) slips and slides exquisitely, its uneven metre so strange and beguiling that it's both impossible to dance to and impossible to sit still to. Clapton was leaving his British blues roots far behind.

Cale, a little-known Tulsa songwriter, had been surprised and intrigued when Clapton covered "After Midnight" on his first solo album, 1970's *Eric Clapton*. Cale's inspiration as a straight-arrow minimalist was to hover over Clapton's '70s output – even on albums like *461 Ocean Boulevard* (1974), where none of his songs were actually performed – and grew stronger, if anything, towards the end of the decade. Not only did Clapton start *Slowhand* with Cale's "Cocaine" (and sing "I'll Make Love To You Anytime" on the 1978 follow-up, *Backless*), but he appropriated Cale's whispering, chugging sound for his Top 40 singles "Lay Down Sally" and "Promises". It was a style popular with radio listeners and fellow musicians alike. Among those who emulated Clapton emulating Cale was Mark Knopfler, the singer and leader of the emerging Dire Straits.

Other Clapton followers, however, were frustrated by the absence of drama and risk in his post-*Layla* music. *No Reason To Cry* (1976), depending on how one looked at it, was either a stellar symposium of rock socialites – Bob Dylan, Ronnie Wood, Robbie Robertson and The Band – or a study in underachievement by a clique of self-satisfied drunks. Dylan, rhyming "sign language" with "eating a sandwich", isn't the only one who sounds keen to get the recording session finished and the party started.

It's a depressing thought, listening to this boxset, that Clapton was sometimes merely making music that sounded half-decent to him when he was pissed. *No Reason To Cry* isn't the sole offender, but as we listen to Clapton bizarrely impersonating The Band's Richard Manuel on "Black Summer Rain", we're bound to wonder if one of Britain's most illustrious guitarists has drunk so much that he's forgotten who he is.

The '70s was a decade when Clapton coveted, mourned and finally wooed the girl. But look what happened as a result. Having immortalised Pattie Boyd in "Layla", he sentimentalised her in "Wonderful Tonight". To go from "Hellhound On My Trail" to "The Lady In Red" would not be every bluesman's idea of musical progression. Then again, unlike Robert Johnson, Clapton survived to tell the tale.

EXTRAS: All remastered, these LPs come 4/10 packaged in a box.



AFRICAN HEAD CHARGE

My Life In A Hole In The Ground/ Environmental Studies/ Drastic Season/ Off The Beaten Track ON-U SOUND

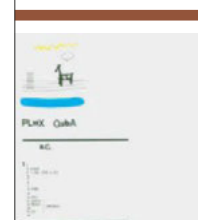
7/10

Four visions of a psychedelic Africa, hauled from the On-U vaults

By 1981, Adrian Sherwood was a pioneer in UK dub reggae, behind groups including New Age Steppers and Singers & Players (the former featuring post-punk stars Ari Up and Keith Levene, the latter, Jamaican heavyweights Bim Sherman and Prince Far I). With African Head Charge, Sherwood was headed really far out. Ostensibly the vehicle of Ghanaian percussionist Bonjo Iyabinghi Noah, African Head Charge found Sherwood flexing studio skills, using rumbling echo, ambitious tape edits and "found sounds" – car crashes, flowing water, breaking glass. The title of 1981's *My Life In A Hole In The Ground* is a sly nod to Eno and Byrne's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*, condensing Eno's psychedelic Africa to a murky, stoned fug; Prince Far I pops up on "Far Away Chant", his voice slowed to a gurgle. 1983's *Drastic Season* is perhaps the pick of the bunch, adding digital production but keeping ethnographic weirdness on "Timbuktu Express" and "Bazaar". *Off The Beaten Track* has Jah Wobble on bass and, on "Language & Mentality", an Albert Einstein monologue set to a dreamy steppers bounce.

EXTRAS: Sleeve notes.

4/10 LOUIS PATTISON



NUNO CANAVARRO

Plux Quba (reissue, 1988)

DRAG CITY

Quiet radicalism – electronica in 1980s Portugal

9/10

Nuno Canavarro's debut

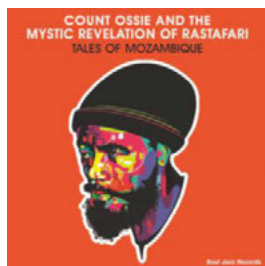
album of miniature electronics, *Plux Quba*, took a while to find its audience – in the early 1990s, it was discovered by German composer Christoph Heemann, who subsequently introduced it to his friends, among them Jan St Werner of Mouse On Mars and Microstoria, and Jim O'Rourke. The latter reissued *Plux Quba* in the late '90s on his Moikai imprint, giving the album a much-needed boost in accessibility. Since then, it's taken on a near-totemic status in certain circles, and it's not hard to hear why: it's a deeply personal document, one that refuses commonplace expectations of what experimental music can be, surprising the listener at every turn. Part of *Plux Quba*'s magic is its pop backbone – while it moves through stretches of abstraction, there's a real love for melody in microcosm here, best found in the sweeping, glinting synthesis of "Wask". Elsewhere, its gentle playfulness, and its understanding of the joy in simple, unpretentious experimentation, lends *Plux Quba* a strangely eldritch air: imagine a series of music boxes falling in and out of sync, as a soundtrack to a 19th-century magic lantern show. Almost three decades later, there's still nothing quite like it.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



COUNT OSSIE AND THE MYSTIC REVELATION OF RASTAFARI

Tales Of Mozambique

SOUL JAZZ

8/10

Roots songs and spiritual revelations from the man who gave reggae its beat

The London label Soul Jazz are well known for their elegantly curated selections from the renowned Kingston production house, Studio One, but a handful of more recent releases have sought to

reveal the building blocks of the Jamaican music that filtered around the world in the '60s and '70s: from a collection of ska pioneer Sir Coxsone's very earliest productions to *Rastafari: The Dreads Enter Babylon 1955-83*, a compilation showing what reggae derived from the religious chant and shuffling rhythms of nyabingi drumming.

Now the label builds on this story through a closer look at the singular music of Oswald Williams. Born in St Thomas, Jamaica in 1926, Williams is the inventor of nyabingi drumming, and the man who imprinted Rastafari consciousness on reggae's DNA. Introduced to Rastafarianism as a boy, by the early '50s Williams had reinvented himself as Count Ossie, and was leading a religious community in the hills of Wareika, Kingston, where initiates would practise hand drumming and vocal chanting in styles inherited from the Bantu traditions of the Eastern Congo. At the time, Rastafarians were marginalised in Jamaican society and regarded as outlaws, and this remained a cloistered community until 1959, when the rumba dancer Marguerita Mahfood invited the Count's troupe to perform at Kingston's Ward Theatre. That same year, producer Prince Buster invited Ossie and his troupe to bring their shuffling percussion to a recording of "Oh Carolina" by vocal trio the Folkes Brothers, the first commercially released single to integrate traditional Rastafarian styles with popular music.

Tales Of Mozambique dates from rather later – to 1975, by which time international stars like Bob Marley were preaching the Rasta life from the stage, and the Count had returned from a period of retirement with new music that was soulful, mystic and deeply idiosyncratic. Pairing his percussion troupe with The Mystics, a horn group led by saxophonist Cedric "Im" Brooks, *Tales Of Mozambique* floats somewhere between roots reggae, the spiritual jazz of Pharoah Sanders or Sun Ra, and recordings of African tribal drumming. At times, it's almost ascetic in its simplicity, "Selam Nna Wadada (Peace & Love)" and "I Am A Warrior" comprised of little but worshipful chants and steady, trance-like drums. Other moments are more musical. "No Night In Zion" is a wistful reggae hymn borne up on swirling keys, while Brooks' horn comes to the fore on plaintive instrumentals like "Run One Mile" and "Let Freedom Reign". Then there's the title track, on which the Count relates the tale of the 15th-century colonisation of Mozambique over wheedling pipes and full-throated yodels.

This would be Count Ossie's final testament – just a year later, he died in a traffic accident, run off the road by a drunken bus driver. But *Tales Of Mozambique* proves he was that truly rare figure: one who laid the foundations for an entire genre, but whose visionary music nonetheless stood alone, sui generis.

LOUIS PATTISON



ORNETTE COLEMAN

To Whom Who Keeps A Record
(reissue, 1975)

SUPERIOR VIADUCT

8/10

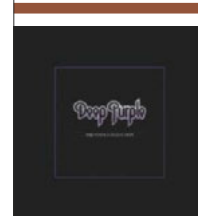
Scorching outtakes set from Coleman's revolutionary phase

Another in a rather long list of great jazz albums that originally, and inexplicably, only saw release in Japan, *To Whom Who Keeps A Record* gathers together session outtakes from one of saxophonist Ornette Coleman's most sainted phases, the period between 1959 to 1961 where he pretty much ripped up and rewrote the rulebook for modern jazz. The material here is culled from recording sessions for *Change Of The Century* and *This Is Our Music*, albums where the trio of Coleman on alto, Don Cherry on pocket trumpet and Charlie Haden on bass were accompanied by either Billy Higgins or Ed Blackwell on drums. Coleman's compositions always felt rigorously plotted, even as he allowed the musicians to extrapolate on the melody leads he provided; there's a pure stream of logic to the music here that could only be Coleman's voice. Each piece feels like a becalmed unravelling, even as the quartet shared the taut energy of great collective jazz playing. As Coleman himself would say, via the song titles for the album, "Music always brings goodness to us all. PS: Unless one has some other motive for its use."

EXTRAS: Liner notes from the writer,

8/10 Byron Coley.

JON DALE



DEEP PURPLE

The Vinyl Collection '72 to '87

UNIVERSAL

Hard rock pioneers' studio prime, remastered and recaptured on vinyl across seven LPs

7/10

Though Deep Purple had existed for four years by 1972, having already produced some seven LPs, including a 1968 US Billboard Top 10 single with Joe South's "Hush", when they pivoted into the mesmerising *Machine Head* they were a brand new animal. With sizzling guitar-and-keyboard tradeoffs, courtesy of Ritchie Blackmore and Jon Lord, the group's dark textures, muscular melodies and blues-in-a-blender approach marked a transition from blues-rock to hard rock to heavy metal. The album, also featuring the group's strongest songwriting collective, remains their best by a long shot. 1974's *Burn* (enter David Coverdale) and 1975's *Come Taste The Band* (exit Blackmore, enter Tommy Bolin) represent decent if deeply flawed follow-ups. Unending, album-to-album personnel changes (to cite just one factor) conspired to prevent the band from building on "Smoke On The Water"'s momentum; clichés swelled, songwriting thinned and the Purple slowly dumbed down. Still, if you're not looking for anything philosophically deep, substantial chunks of the '70s output and '80s-comeback-era oeuvres – like *The House Of Blue Light*'s semi-operatic "Bad Attitude", a late 1980s attempt to re-engage the mainstream – remain musically vibrant, a riff machine built on thunder and bluster.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN



EPIC SOUNDTRACKS

Rise Above
(reissue, 1992)

TROUBADOUR

Songs for wayfaring strangers, from a Swell Map

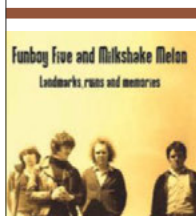
9/10

Most of the members of UK

post-punkers Swell Maps – notably, Nikki Sudden, Jowe Head and Richard Earl – made solo records after the group split, but, the odd single aside, Epic Soundtracks was a late bloomer. This was doubtless partly due to being drummer-in-demand for a number of great groups: across the 1980s, Epic played in Crime & The City Solution, These Immortal Souls and, with brother Nikki and Dave Kusworth, The Jacobites. Epic seemed tentative about songwriting, until the tent of Sonic Youth coaxed him out of his shell, after which he wrote and recorded the songs on *Rise Above*. It's bold and brave, hymning Laura Nyro and Todd Rundgren when lesser talents were shoe-gazing or hypnotised by grunge. But with a little help from friends (Rowland S Howard, members of Dinosaur Jr, Primal Scream and Sonic Youth), Epic's vision – pop music beamed via the Brill Building, through romantic devastation and into teenage symphonies to God – was fully realised. An emotionally disarming debut.

EXTRAS: A second disc of demos, instrumentals and outtakes traces *Rise Above*'s painstaking development. There's also a booklet with an excellent essay from Chris Coleman, editor of *What A Nice Way To Turn Seventeen*.

JONDALE



FUNBOY FIVE/ MILKSHAKE MELON

Landmarks, Ruins And Memories

AVE PHOENIX

Hemel Hempstead's punky Caravan back in tow

8/10

Between appearing in Hawkwind's "Silver Machine" video aged 15 and writing for *Sounds* in the early 1980s, Mick Sinclair blithely blurred the boundaries between twinkly prog and spiky new wave with Hemel Hempstead's Funboy Five – that's him rocking the Art Garfunkel-hair and cardigan look on the cover of this retrospective. The Funboy Five earned a Peel Session before unleashing an unforgettable two-bob single, 1980's thrillingly wobbly "Life After Death", included here along with demos and works from Sinclair's one-man side-project Milkshake Melon, some of which circulated in DIY-fundamentalist cassette circles back in the day. Fans of lost Cardiff band The Table's awesome Caravan-meets-The Clash 1977 single "Do The Standing Still" – or indeed Planet Gong's punked-up "Opium For The People" – will devour lost Funboy Five cuts like "Haircut Bob Dylan 66" and "Angela Rippon", mindful that split-knee loons with a Pistols T-shirt may have been the killer combination all along.

EXTRAS: A vinyl-only release, it features sleeve notes from Sinclair – who may still have a few copies of the original single for sale via the band's website. The band's lone, super self-conscious Peel Session is also in circulation on the web.

JIM WIRTH



GAME THEORY

Lolita Nation
(reissue, 1987)

OMNIVORE

Pop like a punch to the mouth: 1980s Golden State pop magnates' crowning glory, now nearly doubled

9/10

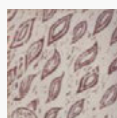
Arguably the most audacious pop group thrown up through the halcyon '80s days when every city seemingly fashioned a Big Star or REM knockoff or three, Scott Miller's Game Theory hit a dizzying height on this, their 1987 Mitch Easter-produced, penultimate effort. Devastating, soaring pop hooks (see "The Real Sheila" and "Chardonnay") mix with jittery, kitchen-sink aural experimentation in ways crazed, ambitious and transcendent. Originally a double-album, now enhanced with 21 extra tracks – including a batch of fascinating, tell-tale covers (the Hollies to the Sex Pistols) – it proffers Miller as a true believer, one daring to drift and stretch, to redefine what pop was, what it could be, emotionally, sonically, conceptually and musically. *Lolita Nation* gave him room to try it all: sleepy soul ballads, jangle rockers, wall-of-guitar dirges, ractety Crazy Horse-type noise, snippets of sound collage and powerpop so jagged it veers into jazz. The six-minute "The Waist And The Knees" features killer hooks crossed with madness, Big Star's *Third* approach pushed well over the edge then kicked around for good measure. Dense, challenging and fearless, *Lolita Nation* raised stakes that few artists have glimpsed since.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN

HOW TO BUY... SWELL MAPS SOLO

A trip to Recordshopville

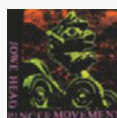


RICHARD EARL
The Egg Store Illk PILOT, 1981

A hidden DIY gem, Richard Earl aka Biggles Books' *The Egg Store Illk* was an early satellite from Swell

Maps' planet. From the same universe as the instrumentals on the Maps' *Jane From Occupied Europe*, via cutlery percussion, bare bass plunk, and warped tattoos from brass and harmonium.

8/10



JOWE HEAD
Pincer Movement

HEDONICS, 1981

Pincer... makes its debt to the Swell Maps clear in its version of "Cake Shop Girl" from *Jane From Occupied Europe*. From there, it opens out to experimental miniatures, droning stumble-pop ("Diesel Loco", "Glistening Pincers") and "Crawfish", which finds Dr John's swamp voodoo in a Camden squat.

7/10



THE JACOBITES
Robespierre's Velvet Basement GLASS, 1985

The classicist of the Maps, Nikki Sudden's The Jacobites, teamed with Dave Kusworth, made gorgeously fragile records, full of rich acoustic heartbreakers, equal part Big Star *Third*, Johnny Thunders at his most vulnerable, and the Stones' "No Expectations". *Robespierre's...* is their dark masterpiece.

9/10

JONDALE



HARPERS BIZARRE

The Complete Singles Collection 1965-70

CHERRY RED

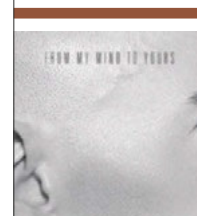
Golden harmonies from overlooked West Coast sunshine crew

9/10

While 1970s Cali soft-rock remains ineffably hip, its 1960s pop antecedent – epitomised by harmony groups such as The Association and Harpers Bizarre – remains a relatively neglected niche. This 26-track comp reveals HB's baroque arrangements and madrigal-styled vocals to be one of the under-appreciated glories of pop's golden age. Led by Ted Templeman (who went on to produce Van Morrison, Beefheart, Little Feat and the Doobies), sugared interpretations of "The 59th Street Bridge Song", "Anything Goes", "Chattanooga Choo Choo", "Wichi Tai To" and a gossamer re-interpretation of "Knock On Wood" (with Ry Cooder on guitar), plus covers of songs by Randy Newman, Nilsson and Van Dyke Parks, are all exquisite exercises in candyfloss sunshine pop at its most sublime. If they had been able to harness their vocal enchantment towards inventive and original material rather than relying on covers, they might today stand more prominently among the ranks of pop's most blessed vocal groups of all time.

EXTRAS: Five tracks recorded in their earlier incarnation as The Tikis for the Autumn label, where Sly Stone was the in-house producer.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



RICHIE HAWTIN

From My Mind To Yours

PLUS 8

Techno stalwart revisits the past for 25th anniversary of his label

6/10

Canadian producer Richie

Hawtin helped shape a bold

new techno future in the early 1990s with Plus 8, the label he founded with John Acquaviva, and his own numerous pseudonymous productions as Plastikman, FUSE and the like. Twenty-five years on, his sleek, bone-rattling acid house from that period still sounds ominously progressive yet, as an artist, Hawtin has for a long time struggled to match the searing elegance of his earlier work, and in some quarters is better known today for his haircut and own-brand sake than his music. Having underwhelmed with Plastikman's recent *EX*, his shortcomings as a producer are exposed once more on label anniversary set *From My Mind To Yours*, which sees Hawtin, inspired by Plus 8's classic 1991 compilation *From Our Minds To Yours*, try to produce new tracks in the spirit of those clattering originals, using stripped-down gear and self-imposed limits. As much as this is essentially another Hawtin record, each alias allows him to try something slightly different: Plastikman's fetish for percussion on "Akrobatix", for example, or the fruity burbling of 80xx's "Creep" and "Grindr", which conjure the goofy hedonism of the preceding decade's minimal techno fad, when Hawtin last ruled the roost.

EXTRAS: None.

PIERS MARTIN



THIS HEAT

This Heat/Health & Efficiency/Deceit (reissue, 1979, '80, '81)

MODERN CLASSICS/LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Revolutionary, truth-telling and abstract protest: post-punk's finest, revisited. *By Jon Dale*



9/10

DOMINANT NARRATIVE TELLS us that post-punk came out of the fire of punk – the disruptive possibilities of 1976 opening the way for a more questioning, experimental programme. It's a convenient story, but for the most part, it

reads like a not-so-subtle warping of the truth. Dig into the archives of most of the truly significant post-punk groups, and you'll find stories that wind further back, into the strange climes of the early to mid-'70s: T.Rex fanatics, Canterbury prog fall-out, jejune improvisers, Welsh folkies – this is the real stuff of post-punk's history.

This Heat benefited from the vegetation clearing of punk and post-punk, but the trio had already earned their stripes in various ways. Drummer Charles Hayward was in Quiet Sun with Phil Manzanera (Roxy Music), Bill MacCormick (Matching Mole) and Dave Jarrett; meeting guitarist Charles Bullen via a music paper advertisement, the two started working together as a free improvising duo, Dolphin Logic, while also joining Radar Favourites, alongside Geoff Leigh (Henry Cow) and Gerry Fitzgerald. Bass player and organist, the late, great Gareth Williams, entered the fray as manager first, before joining Hayward and Bullen in Friendly Rifles.

Too much like the Sex Pistols, that name: an improvisation played along to a multi-layered field recording on cassette, made during the long hot British summer of 1976, would give the trio their lasting tattoo, *This Heat*. That recording would also act as an early manifestation of the trio's practice: everything up for grabs, or as the group's motto would have it, "All possible processes. All channels open. Twenty-four-hour alert."

Particularly once they'd set up Cold Storage, their

own studio and practice space, This Heat were always on call, less a group than a project for living, making protest music that smelted brittle poetry by channelling social angst, and the creeping dread of the beginnings of Thatcherite rule, directly onto tape. You can hear their experiment in relatively bare-bones form on their debut, self-titled album, often referred to as 'Blue & Yellow' after the record sleeve's stark colour scheme. Opening with the quiet buzz and whirr of "Testcard", *This Heat* explodes into the barely unchecked fury of "Horizontal Hold", where the trio's playing cuts in and out of range with sudden, brutish leaps, the group making the most of the alchemical power of tape editing.

"Not Waving", one of *This Heat*'s most dolorous songs, follows, with a distressed voice singing out from uncertain terrain, the group's laminar improvisation moulded into a loosely plotted sea-song: imagine Robert Wyatt's *Rock Bottom* re-scored for Cold War anxiety. These juxtapositions make up

the bulk of *This Heat*: hissing, crepuscule instrumentals like "Diet Of Worms", or "Rainforest" (recorded at their very first gig), weaving between bleak, abstract protest songs. As an album, it's an unrelenting, scorched-earth experience, which makes the following year's "Health & Efficiency" 12" all the more surprising: a joyous, exultant anti-anthem, "dedicated to the sunshine", the title track has strong claim to be This Heat's greatest six minutes, the brief body of the song itself, strung with slack-jawed guitars, giving way to a four-minute coda where a loop unspools to a seeming eternity.

1981's *Deceit*, however, is This Heat's crowning achievement. If *This Heat* was process laid bare, and "Health & Efficiency" a constructivist intervention, *Deceit* is close to the band's state-of-the-world address, taking in geopolitics and military strategy (in Simon Reynolds' *Rip It Up*, Hayward despaired of the national

security policy of Mutually Assured Destruction), painted in unsurprisingly bleak hues. On "Shrink Wrap", they take on false consciousness in a manner similar to Scritti Politti's "Hegemony", calling into question common-sense understandings through tortured vocal display: "Don't bite the hand that feeds you/You can have your cake and eat it."

Elsewhere, This Heat inject yet more ferocity into their songs, the thoroughgoing demystification of song employed by Rock In Opposition gaining new urgency on "SPQR" and "A New Kind Of Water", brusquely cutting from studio to rough live audio on the astonishing "Makeshift Swahili", occasionally dialling down the intensity on gorgeous, hesitant improvisations like "Radio Prague". But it's the commitment and energy of *Deceit* that stays with you, an echo of their legendary live form. As Hayward reflects on the latter, "our whole thing, the politics, the lyrics, was rooted in pure sound, so that was our focus and we seized any chance to unleash the sound with unabashed enthusiasm."

Williams had left by the time *Deceit* was released, and though This Heat carried on briefly with new members, the magic had gone, and they eventually disbanded. The trio would all go on to make excellent music: Hayward with Camberwell Now and Regular Music, and as a powerhouse improviser; Bullen with Lifetones and Circadian Rhythms; and Williams with Mary Currie on the *Flaming Tunes* cassette. There's something mercurial in This Heat's slim body of released music, though, and something intangible, an X factor that constantly eludes conscious articulation. Remarkable music, indeed.

Q&A

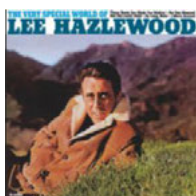
Charles Hayward & Charles Bullen

This Heat are usually framed as a post-punk group. Did punk feel like a divisive moment? HAYWARD: [*This Heat*] were already gigging by the time punk exploded and were very curious when we read things like "No Elvis, Beatles or The Rolling Stones". Unfortunately, when we heard the actual music, it sounded like Chuck Berry on speed. The DIY thing was already in place, the European improv scene, Sun Ra, the German bands like Can and Faust, and most of the punk stuff just didn't have the same commitment to sound.

What made Cold Storage such a unique place to

record? HAYWARD: David Cunningham [of the *Flying Lizards*] told us there was this disused meat fridge at the Acme Studios complex on Acre Lane, Brixton. When we went to take a look, there were no lights working so we had to use torches; it had its own micro-climate in there, mist and stuff. I expected to see a pack of albino wolves.

What did Gareth bring to This Heat, and what are your fondest memories of his presence? BULLEN: Gareth was a very gentle and very funny man! Though he probably seemed to be a bit of a wild man onstage after the first year or so. He was very much into the "non-musician" thing all the way, even though by a year later he had also picked up the bass and guitar and reached a fair bit of technical proficiency on both. *INTERVIEW: JON DALE*



LEE HAZLEWOOD

The Very Special World Of.../Lee Hazlewoodism/Something Special (reissues, 1966, '67, '68)

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

8/10

The psychedelic cowboy's (remastered) MGM years Seduced into signing Lee Hazlewood by his 1963 debut, MGM must have been rather taken aback by the

errant nature of this trilogy. *The Very Special World Of...* offers a great overview of his mix of dark reflection, romance, wry humour and brutal honesty. But alongside a Sinatra-less version of "These Boots Are Made For Walking" and the extraordinary "For One Moment", it also features the wry ode to middle age that is "My Autumn's Done Come" and the novelty schmaltz of "Bugles In The Afternoon". A year later came the eccentric *Lee Hazlewoodism: Its Cause And Cure*, where he flirts with yé-yé on "The Girls In Paris", spikes "I Am A Part" with mournful spoken word and adds comedy brass to the honky-tonk "Suzy Jane Is Back In Town". On *Something Special* (originally released in Germany alone) Hazlewood steps back from the extravagant orchestrations he was determined would better Spector's, in favour of a leaner, more soulful sound, typified by the gently rollicking "Shades", "Child" and flower-power pop and an anguished "Hands". That year, he set up his own LHI label – either the relationship with MGM had worn thin, or he'd spent all their money.

EXTRAS: Bonus tracks include a duet with LHI muse Suzi Jane Hokom, "Summer Wine".

SHARON O'CONNELL



BB KING

Here's One You Didn't Know About

ACE

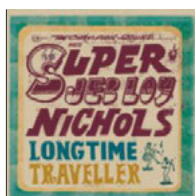
...plus two dozen more lost gems from the 1950s

8/10

With more than 60 albums to his name and 700-plus tracks in circulation, it's hard to believe that there remains anything King recorded during his 65-year career that hasn't been released and reissued many times over. Yet there is reportedly enough unheard 1950s material in the vaults, recorded for the Bihari brothers' Modern/Kent/RPM labels, to fill a dozen CDs. Most are alternative takes of BB staples, but these 25 sides cherry-picked from this unexpected treasure trove suggest the unreleased versions were seldom inferior – merely different, for King in his early years seldom sang or played a song the same way twice. An outtake of "Sweet Little Angel" includes an extra verse. The guitar solo on "Early In The Morning" is markedly jazzier than the well-known 1956 single. A second take of 1959's "Goin' Down Slow" finds King complaining "we made the record already", and then doing it again superbly, but quite differently. Stellar stuff that also reaffirms that King in his 1950s incarnation was not only already a supreme guitarist, but one of the finest R'n'B vocalists of his generation.

EXTRAS: Scholarly track notes and a 16-page booklet packed with evocative archive photos.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



JEB LOY NICHOLS

Long Time Traveller (reissue, 2010)

ON-U SOUND

8/10

Freewheeling alt.folk bard gets doused in dub Jeb Loy Nichols is the

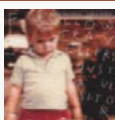
Midwestern soulboy with a lilting cowboy croon who has lived most of his life in rural Wales. Since 1990, across 15 albums, including five with his wife as The Fellow Travellers, he has gently set the world to rights with his earthy storytelling and easygoing blues. While his song tends to remain the same and fame eludes him, *Long Time Traveller* is the excellent album he recorded with On-U Sound dub colossus Adrian Sherwood – released in Japan in 2010 – and marks a homecoming of sorts. Sherwood took Nichols under his wing when the American first visited London in the early '80s (they shared a squat with Neneh Cherry and The Slits' Ari Up) and the pair produced an early On-U Sound cut, the deranged "Things That Made US" by Jeb Loy & The Oil Wells. Things are more sedate on this reunion, which sees Nichols' rootsy songs set to a range of delicious dub riddims courtesy of Dub Syndicate and Roots Radics, with additional playing by Skip McDonald. It's a natural fit: Nichols' sweetly crumpled vocal, reminiscent of Horace Andy, bobs across the bulbous bass of "To Be Rich (Should Be A Crime)" and "Lonely King Of The Country", adding a new dimension to his homespun sound.

EXTRAS: Second disc of additional songs and alternate mixes.

PIERS MARTIN

HOW TO BUY... JEB LOY NICHOLS

The country-dub man's choice cuts



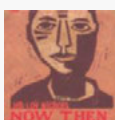
THE FELLOW TRAVELLERS

Just A Visitor OKRA, 1992

Nichols' second CD of low-slung country-dub and campfire blues with his wife Lorraine Morley and

On-U Sound man Martin Harrison was, oddly enough, crowned album of the year by Germany's *Spex* magazine in '92. Commenting on *The Fellow Travellers*, one Townes Van Zandt noted: "This guy's singing with a voice I never heard before."

7/10

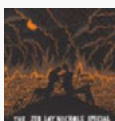


JEB LOY NICHOLS

Now Then TUITION, 2005

He recorded his fourth solo album *Now Then* – clever title – in Nashville and London with the likes of Dan Penn and bass heavyweight Dennis Bovell. After the familiar dub of opener "Sometimes Shooting Stars", Nichols opens up with a tender set of soulful country numbers, best of which is "Lelah Mae".

8/10



JEB LOY NICHOLS

Jeb Loy Nichols Special DECCA/CITY COUNTRY CITY, 2012

Picked up by Decca on the strength of "Countrymusicdisco45" from '09's *Parish Bar*, hence its inclusion here, Nichols' most recent solo LP distills all that's great about him: his laidback voice and melancholy disposition... summed up best in his own "Disappointment" and an acoustic cover of reggae staple "Hard Times".

8/10

PIERS MARTIN



JESSE MALIN

The Art Of Self-Destruction (reissue, 2003)

ONE LITTLE INDIAN

Ex-D Generation frontman revisits early solo outing

8/10

There was a point, not long into his solo career, when the Queens-bred Jesse Malin was the new Springsteen. He was also tipped to be the new Neil Young and Steve Earle, though, naturally, such heady predictions came to nothing. Runaway success may have eluded Malin, but his first album, *The Art Of Self-Destruction* (2003), went some way to ensuring longevity, such was the contemplative assurance of his songwriting reflecting on his hard-knock life. ...*Self-Destruction's* blend of introspective Americana and rowdier roots rock arrived seemingly fully-formed and, 13 years on, sounds like it could have been made today. It's significant that Malin's friend Ryan Adams, another so-called "new Springsteen", was on production duties. Along with being the subject of hyperbole, both have a strange charisma, a keen ear for melody and favour gritty ruminations on urban life. Malin's love-hate relationship with his native New York is at its most affecting on "Brooklyn" and "Riding On The Subway", the latter notable for its spookily Cobain-esque delivery. Springsteen he is not, but, in the realms of understated Americana, Malin's debut allows him to hold his head high.

EXTRAS: New sleeve notes from The Gaslight Anthem's Brian Fallon and a bonus disc of demos.

FIONA STURGES



THE MAMAS AND THE PAPAS

The Complete Singles

REAL GONE MUSIC

All the group hits – plus (very much) more

7/10

Fifty years ago on January 8, "California Dreamin'"

entered the *Billboard* chart at No 4. It introduced The Mamas And The Papas' sun-glazed, regret-tinged mix of folk, Beatles-ish pop and psychedelia, built around distinctive four-part harmonies and the over-easy soul voice of Cass Elliott. That song was their second single; their debut, "Go Where You Wanna Go", made no impact, but it opens this chronologically ordered, 53-track compilation of all the band's (remastered, mono) singles, along with their B-sides, plus singles from the subsequent solo careers of Elliott (including her joyous ode to individualism, "Make Your Own Kind Of Music"), John Phillips (just two) and Denny Doherty (four). With the Wrecking Crew and producer Lou Adler in place, the Mamas' golden age lasted three years, during which time they scored original hits with the evergreen "Monday Monday", "I Saw Her Again", "Words Of Love", "Creeque Alley", "Twelve Thirty (Young Girls Are Coming To The Canyon)" – their Spector-ish, tambourine-heavy ode to the pull of LA – and "Dancing Bear", as well as a clutch of covers. The dream was shattered by infidelities, sackings, drug addiction, legal challenges and a shaky '80s revival (The New Mamas And The Papas), but these pop glories endure.

EXTRAS: None.
SHARON O'CONNELL



snappingly fierce and gently otherworldly. Thompson, likewise, oscillates between thrumming overdrive and sparse statement. It's 10 minutes before anything like a conventional folk approach arrives, with Jenkins adding flute, before a final, joyous section that reminds us that while the song is named after "a long-legged wader, charismatic and graceful", something of the greenwood clings obstinately to it.

"Lapwing" couldn't be more different. For starters it's Jansch at the piano, it's short, it's in waltz time and its tune is etched among cryptic flurries that hover midway between jazz and modern classical. A two-minute delight. "Bittern" sounds the changes again, a skipping blues

BERT JANSCH

Avocet

EARTH

Guitar maestro's inspired, avian-themed instrumental set from 1978. *By Neil Spencer*



9/10

WHAT IS IT with folkies and birds? Songs hymning birds and flight are legion in pop, but most merely use our winged friends as a symbol of longing and liberty. Folk singers, meanwhile, like to get particular, to single out species and project an inner

life on the gull of their dreams. Alasdair Roberts' "Waxwing" for example, or songs by David Rotheray, Jim Causley or The Imagined Village's Simon Emmerson. Twitchers all.

So was Bert Jansch, whose "Blackbirds Of Brittany" (a fundraiser single for the RSPB) and "Bird Song" are stand-outs in the oeuvre. Folk's connection to birds is obvious enough, the wellspring of tradition being rural and infused with nature. The 18-minute title track of *Avocet*, for example, has its genesis in the centuries-old "Cuckoo", a commonplace song but one that obsessed the much-missed British folk pioneer, whose heavily elaborated version took months of development.

Jansch had finally taken to playing the piece live with bassist Danny Thompson and fiddler/flautist Martin Jenkins when the trio took to the road in 1977. It was an opportune gap in their careers, with Jansch's Conundrum project a busted flush, Thompson off-duty from John Martyn and Jenkins a perfect available accomplice. With punk and new wave raging overhead, the only game in town for

folk was the live circuit, where Scandinavia had long been a second home.

When Jansch's Danish manager, Peter Abrahamsen, heard "Avocet" live he financed an album, with the title track occupying one vinyl side. Four other instrumentals that Jansch had accumulated were added, plus one from Jenkins, each named after a sea or wading bird, and the record was released in 1978 on Abrahamsen's Ex-Libris label, arriving, tardily, a year later on UK Charisma.

The album is thus something of a curio in Jansch's career, yet one that was especially close to his heart. You can see why. Jansch himself is on peak form, his rapport with his bassist effortless after their years together in Pentangle, while Jenkins does all that was asked of him in what Colin Harper's insightful liner notes make clear was a meticulously prepared session. Jansch knew what he wanted. "He had it clear in his head how each piece could flow together in continuity, in terms of key rather than tempo," recalls Jenkins.

There was real care, too, in the production at Copenhagen's Sweet Silence Studios, whose clarity and warmth have been winningly remastered for this new edition. A photograph from the sessions shows a shaggy, beaming Jansch at the console surrounded by a smiling team.

"Avocet" is the album's wonder, with the antique air reprised in assorted guises, at times elegant and almost mediaeval, at others driving and jazzy, while Jenkins' violin has an almost futurist quality. This is Jansch leading us a merry dance, and his guitar is at the heart of everything; restless and intricate, string-

played on acoustic, though its serpentine melody is infused with skirls of electric guitar and driven by busy bass parts that owe more to Charlie Mingus than to the "elusive, secretive heron" after which the piece is named. Meandering and lovely.

"Kingfisher" is more contemplative, its melody played on fiddle while Jansch and Thompson compete on string-snapping techniques. Jenkins' "Osprey" slows down further, led by a violin melody that carries something of the power and menace of its subject. Jansch contrasts with impatient picking, shifting into unexpected jazz chords. "Kittiwake" is the simplest piece here, another seemingly effortless little melody intricately explored.

It is, as Colin Irwin puts it, "gloriously timeless music", so out of time that *Avocet* re-arrives 30 years on sounding fresher and more adventurous than most of what's presently rolling off the music mills of any persuasion; folk, jazz, classical. Like its creator, *Avocet* answers to all yet none of those names. Grounded in tradition, deeply schooled in the art of folk-picking that lay behind so much of pop's glory years ('The White Album', The Byrds and Zeppelin wouldn't have existed without it), a songsmith and a composer who expressed admiration for classical guitarist Julian Bream, Jansch transcended genres. On *Avocet*, his vision found a point of perfection.

EXTRAS: CD comes in slim, stylish book with bird 7/10 prints. Vinyl edition has all six prints in large format.





CHRIS MARKER

La Jetée

SUPERIOR VIADUCT

A key 20th-century film, bumped to audio
Perhaps one day, people will look back on French filmmaker, photographer, prose stylist and

8/10

multimedia pioneer Chris Marker as one of the most significant artists of the 20th century. Born in 1921, Marker lived a long, productive life, making an incredible amount of essay films and documentaries. In later years, his influence would find sure footing in experimental and underground music, as well: Damon & Naomi published Marker's *Immemory* via their Exact Change publishing house, while musicians such as Oren Ambarchi and Pimmon have produced tributes to his films. He even crossed over into popular music consciousness, directing a film clip for Electronic's "Getting Away With It". Dystopian science-fiction short *La Jetée* may be his finest work – it is certainly his best known, with its central conceit of a time-travelling experiment borrowed by Terry Gilliam for *Twelve Monkeys*. The audio track is presented here in full, Trevor Duncan's score mirroring the dark claustrophobia of the film, the dialogue evocative as ever, even without Marker's stunning photomontage visuals.

EXTRAS: A different language on each side of the LP, one in French, the other English: a good way to deal with the effects of translation.

JONDALE



THE POP GROUP

For How Much Longer Do We Tolerate Mass Murder? (reissue, 1980)

FREAKS R US

Second LP from Bristol post-punks gets its first ever CD issue

6/10

The Pop Group appeared on the cover of *NME* in September 1978, before the teenage quintet had even released a record; a mark of the potency of their music, a blend of free jazz, dub, funk and radical politics that took punk's insurrectionary promise and ran with it. But come 1980, their stridency was beginning to count against them: reviewing *For How Much Longer...* in *NME*, Paul Morley accused the group of "anti-sentimentality of a peculiarly self-deluding and unpleasant kind... they could be the consequence of a failed revolution." Certainly, this is a harder LP to love than its predecessor. Whereas Y cuts like "Thief Of Fire" felt visionary in their quasi-mystical language, the second LP can be more hectoring: "Nixon and Kissinger should be tried for war crimes/For the secret bombing of Cambodia," screeches Mark Stewart. Still, the group's itchy, hairshirt funk can be bracing and impressively ambitious – hear guitarist Gareth Sager channel everyone from Nile Rodgers to Philip Glass on "Blind Faith" – and there are glimpses of humour: see "Rob A Bank", a demented wah-wah riff on the Robin Hood theme tune. Sadly absent is the original LP's Last Poets collaboration, "One Out Of Many", though the addition of non-album single "We Are All Prostitutes" softens the blow.

EXTRAS: Vinyl adds four double-sided posters.

5/10 LOUIS PATTISON



JIMMY RABBITT & RENEGADE

The Texas Album

SAINT ROCH RECORDINGS

Authentic outlaw country album, unreleased for 40 years.
Jimmy Rabbitt was a DJ

8/10

in Texas and the 1960s who played British Invasion mixed with American garage rock, adding enough patter to make him the local celebrity who introduced The Beatles at a Dallas concert in 1964. Rabbitt moved to LA and, being a Southern man, began playing the likes of Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings to his West Coast audience. Rabbitt could perform, as well – he released some garage 45s in the 1960s – and in the mid-'70s formed a band to play cowboy tunes in LA bars. The band – originally called Texas, later Renegade – were signed to Atlantic and released a terrific album produced by Waylon Jennings in 1977, but several other recordings never saw the light of the day. This album collects sessions produced by Jerry Wexler in 1973 and includes a mix of covers and originals, all soaked in the beer-and-whisky spirit of honky tonk. Several songs are magnificent – the brilliant cover of Tom T Hall's "Homecoming", which has a New Orleans roll thanks to James Booker on keys, or the punchy original "Sweetness Is In You", with Rabbitt growling about "cocaine in the ashtray" – making it something of a mystery why this has only just been released.

EXTRAS: Five additional takes on download

6/10 card.

PETER WATTS

HOW TO BUY... BEST OF KIN

The Family family's finest hours



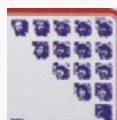
FAMILY

Music In A Doll's House

REPRISE, 1968

Paisley-sunburst debut 45 "Scene Through The Eye Of A Lens" was Family's most psychedelic moment; their first LP, the following year, was a step on. A deliciously awkward juxtaposition of Traffic-like rootsiness, creepy Victoriana and Roger Chapman's inimitably leather-lunged take on the blues.

8/10



FAMILY

Fearless REPRISE, 1971

Family's billing as art-rockers remains fairly spurious, with their giddy fifth the closest they come to experimental. Whimsical flashes include the wonky tempos of "Spanish Tide" and the working men's club funk of "Save Some For Thee".

8/10



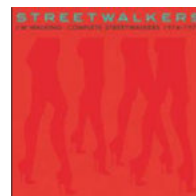
ROGER CHAPMAN

Mail Order Magic KAMERA, 1980

Not punk compatible for all his rough edges, Family's frontman joined a good number of his peers in heading for new-wave-neutral Germany when the going got tough. This set Chappo's stall out for the upcoming decades with the thunderous Byrds of the "Unknown Soldier" and beer-bellied apocalypse "Higher Ground".

7/10

JIM WIRTH



STREETWALKERS

I'm Walking

MADFISH

1974-1977: detailed recap of "Chappo" and "Charlie"'s post-Family affair

The attentions of Jenny Fabian – who based her salacious 1969 novel *Grouper*

7/10

on her time with Leicester's *jolie-laide* gift to prog-pop – were some consolation for Family as they failed to follow fellow arts lab faves Pink Floyd to worldwide celebrity, but after their demise, gargle master Roger Chapman and guitarist John Whitney clearly hungered for something bigger. This hubristically colossal 15CD set tracks their cocaine-dusted swipe for Faces-style celebrity, the occasional bursts of subtlety on their self-titled 1974 debut – the fragile "Sue, Betty & Jean", the trad-jazz flashes on "Roxianna" – fading out into faintly funky cock-rock as they toured with Black Sabbath and The Who. Streetwalkers were kitschy English kinsmen to The Sensational Alex Harvey Band by the time they peaked with their third LP, 1976's *Red Card*, featuring bouncy drumming courtesy of future Iron Maiden man Nicko McBrain, priapic coulda-been hit "Daddy Rolling Stone" and more nuanced ramble "Decadence Code". However, punk was to issue their marching orders within months, and while Peel Sessions and live sets strip away some flab, Chapman's sour conclusion in the fine booklet notes may sum the band up a bit too well: "There was just too much racket... and too many drugs."

EXTRAS: A limited run of 1,500, it includes replica poster, tour programme and beer-mat replicas of each of the four original album sleeves.

JIM WIRTH



TANGERINE DREAM

The Official Bootleg Series: Volume Two

ESOTERIC REACTIVE

Two vintage concerts from synth explorers: 4CDs in a clamshell box

7/10

In January 2015, Edgar Froese experienced a "sudden change of his cosmic address". But the death of its sole continuous member, it would seem, is not climactic enough to halt this long-running kosmische group's musical activities. Instead, a new lineup featuring German electronica maven Ulrich Schnauss dropped "Quantum Key", a brand new EP based on Froese's ideas, last November. Meanwhile, Esoteric continue in their exhaustive reissue campaign, restoring the group's imperial age recordings to print. This 4CD box collects two live concerts, one well-known among collectors, the other comparatively rare. A lesser-heard 1978 set recorded at Paris' Palais Des Congrès appears to be a fan recording, although it's a good one, and an eye-opener to anyone who had TD pegged as wishy-washy ambient muzak. With sometime Iggy Pop man Klaus Krüger pounding the drums and Steve Joliffe darting between sax, flute, and Damo Suzuki-ish vocal incantations, here is close to two hours of surging, symphonic improv far superior to that year's studio LP, *Cyclone*. Meanwhile, a crisp 1980 set at Palast Der Republik in East Berlin welcomes keys man Johannes Schmoelling to the fold, setting the groundwork for the cascading new age reveries of that year's *Tangram*.

EXTRAS: Illustrated booklet, essay.

6/10 LOUIS PATTISON

The Specialist

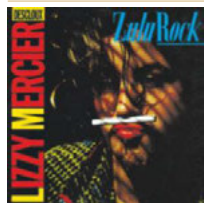
Lizzy Mercier Descloux



Descloux: "post-colonial music"



8/10



9/10



7/10



6/10

LIZZY MERCIER DESCLOUX

Mambo Nassau/Zulu Rock/One For The Soul/Suspense

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Four reissued albums chart the further adventures of a French maverick after making a splash in no-wave-era New York

The early years of a musical career are so often dominated by an artist's efforts to find his or her voice. Yet what makes Lizzy Mercier Descloux such a fascinating case study is that the French singer, poet and artist found so many voices. Given her music's fundamental eccentricity and plurality, it's no wonder that these four albums largely failed to garner wider recognition when they first arrived in the decade following her 1979 debut, *Press Color*, the collection of hyperactive mutant disco that launched Light In The Attic's Descloux reissue programme last year.

Further complicating matters is the fact that the matter of "voice" takes on both figurative and literal meanings when it comes to Descloux. Dispensing with the no-wave angularities of her earliest dalliances with Ze Records boss Michael Esteban, she worked in an astonishing diversity of musical styles throughout the '80s. Most notable are her weird and steamy take on Caribbean funk on 1981's *Mambo Nassau* – recorded at Chris Blackwell's Compass Point Studios in the Bahamas – and the spirited collisions of Shangaan disco, *mbaqanga* rhythms and arty Europop on *Zulu Rock*, the 1984 album that was her biggest success in France. Made in apartheid-era South Africa, Descloux's exercise in cultural exchange preceded *Graceland* by two years and now seems three times as exuberant as Paul Simon could ever manage.

Inspired by her quest to create what Esteban calls a "post-colonial music", Descloux is irrepressibly inventive and inquisitive in her approach to global styles. Better yet, the joy she exudes in these pursuits compensate for the inevitable lack of coherence. Alas, Descloux's music is marred by her liabilities in regards to the other kind of voice. In a remark included in Vivienne Goldman's excellent sleeve notes, one collaborator admits his first impression of Descloux was that "she couldn't sing".

Of course, that's not strictly true. Like her fellow Compass Point habituée Grace Jones, she generally made stellar use of her limited means, whether that meant her ecstatic yelping on *Mambo Nassau*'s brilliantly deconstructed rendition of Kool And The Gang's "Funky Stuff" or her thin but fetching crooning on *One For The Soul*'s "Fog Horn Blues", one of several songs cut with Chet Baker during the

trumpeter's final sessions in Brazil in 1985. Even so, she generally fares less well with the more mannered pop of *One For The Soul* and 1988's *Suspense*, a disappointingly stiff and sterile-sounding swansong whose commercial flop prompted her decision to forego music for painting as her primary creative outlet, until her death of cancer at the age of 48 in 2004. Yet Light In The Attic's reissues serve as an often thrilling testament to the vitality and questing spirit she demonstrated in nearly all her voices.

JASON ANDERSON



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Golden State Psychedelia

BIG BEAT

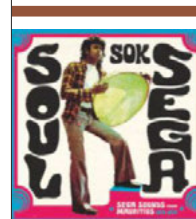
Acid archaeology: outstanding psych artefacts you never knew existed

9/10

For years the prime curators of rarest psych material, Big Beat and its archivist Alec Paleo touch down on a high plane here: 25 all-but-unheard tracks that walk a tightrope – cultural/creative sea change mixed with skewed commercial pop aspirations – culled from Frisco's Golden State Records studio and produced by Leo Kulka in the late '60s/early '70s. Think of it as psych's darkened basement, in contrast to the jamming Dead/Airplane/Quicksilver/Big Brother axis of festival extroverts. In this case, the bands include The Goody Box, The Short Yellow, and Celestial Hysteria, all bent on one-upping, artistically or commercially or both, the aforementioned. The outliers amid the outliers – fuzzed-out-of-their-minds Magician, whose "Fuck For Peace" is a punk/psych marvel, and "Wet Chant", an eerily spaced-out stratospheric piece by The Immediate Family – are deserving headline-grabbers. Yet there's an air of discovery, of transcendence running through every track: The Tow-Away Zone's crazed, Eastern-flavoured "Shab'd" is both representative and definitive. More conventionally, the Ticket Agents' raw garage-rocker "Black Diamonds" and, especially, the dark pop melodicism and stop-start rhythms of The Bristol Boxkite's timeless "Mad Rush World", stunningly dress down so many canonised icons of the era.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN



8/10

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Soul Sok Sèga

STRUT

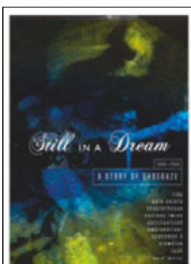
Bewitching, deeply funky brew of African, Asian and island sounds belatedly travels beyond Mauritius

Successfully colonised by the Dutch, the French and

the English and populated by the descendants of native islanders, African slaves and immigrant labourers from India, China and elsewhere, Mauritius boasts a cultural makeup that was bound to yield sounds unheard anywhere else. But even devotees of the recent spate of surveys of tropical music scenes will marvel at the riches on Strut's latest set. *Soul Sok Sèga* celebrates the '70s golden age of *séga*, the sinuously funky home-grown style that was a favourite of dancers and a symbol of national pride even if it was largely eschewed by Mauritius' sole radio station. One of two selections by local superstar Jean-Claude Gaspard, "Séga Souval" is a typically stirring example of the form – as Gaspard performs his lyrics in Creole, the players provide an underlay of rhythms culled from throughout Africa and Asia. The same song's quintessentially Gallic accordion part may seem incongruous to western ears, but the same could be said for the fuzzed-out guitar in John Kenneth Nelson's "Z'Enfant Misère", the shimmering synth on Michel Legris' "Elida" or singer Ti'l'Afrique's raw R'n'B-style delivery on the collection's title track. Thanks to the Mauritian musicians' savvy interweaving of elements from far and wide, this highly particular island sound is as surprising as it is soulful.

EXTRAS: None.

JASON ANDERSON



VARIOUS ARTISTS Still In A Dream: A Story Of Shoegaze CHERRY RED

Nostalgic primer for a once fêted, later reviled, now rehabilitated genre. Caution insists that this 5CD comp deem itself merely "A Story". Opening with The Jesus And Mary Chain's 1990 single, "Rollercoaster",

7/10

its documentation of a scene that celebrated itself so disproportionately that its excesses were laughed out of town by grunge and Britpop is neither chronological nor definitive: East Kilbride's finest may have helped inspire the murky, hypnagogic sounds that characterised shoegaze, but by then they'd begun reappropriating more classic rock'n'roll tropes. Additionally, the absence of, say, undervalued alumni like Earwig and Shiva Affect (or, as compilers acknowledge, bigger names like MBV and Verve) in favour of Spitfire or Bardo Pond may trouble true acolytes. Nonetheless, these 95 tracks offer a considered survey of a now revered era, from early meanderings like the post-Sarah Records psych of 14 Iced Bears – whose pale vocals were echoed by many subsequent pedal-lovers, including Mark Gardener of Ride (represented here by "Drive Blind") – to the droning hypnotherapy of Bowery Electric in 1995. With neglected nuggets from Ecstasy Of St Theresa, Bark Psychosis and Dr Phibes sitting alongside Chapterhouse, Lush and Swervedriver, this provides a rewarding interpretation of the shoegazing tale.

EXTRAS: None. WYNDHAM WALLACE



STEVE WARNER Steve Warner (reissue, 1979) EARTH

Precious psychedelic folk from lost Aussie coffee-house auteur

7/10

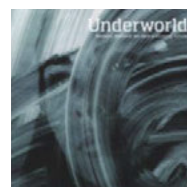
It's interesting to wonder how much great old music

still remains undiscovered. This wonderfully odd record was three years in the making, part-funded by a bank loan and an Australian Arts Council grant. For his sole release, Warner wrote, played, sang, produced, mixed, and even manufactured the record himself, before getting limited distribution via Tasmanian label Candle. This was first released in 1979, but that's misleading. The 13 songs here – dressed in artful arrangements and resourceful production – should have brought it to the surface a decade or so earlier. Much is of unimpeachably high-quality: brilliantly flickering, hemp-scented experiments in folk, prog and pop. The piano-driven "Summer" and "We'll Go On" recall Bill Fay's first records; "Poems In Your Eyes" has the snaking logic of the best Incredible String Band work. Other touchstones include Al Stewart – if only for that clear, dreamlike voice and dextrous fingerpicking. But this is not mere copycatting, as Warner coaxes the authenticity and acidic charm Wooden Wand and Tunng have spent years attempting to perfect. Comforting reel-to-reel tape hiss haunts each track, and you imagine this will sound particularly good on vinyl – good job it's getting a proper black plastic release, too.

EXTRAS: None.

MARK BENTLEY

COMING NEXT MONTH...



➤ As we attempt to adjust to a Bowie-less world, here's some small consolation or distraction, a host of promising records on the horizon. **Underworld** have made what sounds at this point like their best record

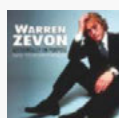
in decades, with the propulsive **Barbara Barbara, We Face A Shining Future**, while **Loretta Lynn** returns with her first LP since 2004's **Van Lear Rose - Full Circle**, a concept album based around Lynn's life, features duets with Willie Nelson and Elvis Costello. Fresh from producing Mavis Staples' **Live! On A High Note**, Oregon's **M Ward** releases his eighth long-player, **More Rain**. **Primal Scream** are back with **Chaosmosis**, while **The Coral** promise **Distance Inbetween**, a harder-hitting follow-up to 2010's **Butterfly House**. And from across the Atlantic, **White Denim** release their seventh LP, **Stiff**, and psych supergroup **Heron Oblivion** make their self-titled debut.

In the busy world of archive releases, March sees a newly unearthed set of **Jeff Buckley** recordings released as **You And I** – the tracks, mostly cut in '93, consist of covers of Dylan, Led Zep, Sly & The Family Stone and more, plus two originals, one previously unheard. **Alex Harvey**'s career gets a definitive overview with **The Last Of The Teenage Idols**, a 14-disc, 217-track box, while **Pere Ubu**'s 1979-'82 period is chronicled in full on

Architecture Of Language. If that isn't enough, various '90s and 2000s albums from Bowie collaborators **Sonic Youth** – including 1998's peerless **A Thousand Leaves** – are reissued on vinyl.

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HOW TO BUY... WARREN ZEVON... LIVE Disorder in the house



Accidentally On Purpose: Classic Live 1978 Concert Broadcast

GOFASTER, 2015
Appearing before an invitation-only audience, backed by a fine band, guitarist Waddy Wachtel churning out spiraling leads, this is Zevon's most glowing rock'n'roll moment. He's ragged, intense, funny, feverishly on point yet barely under control. And the repertoire – including bludgeoning editions of "Werewolves" and "Lawyers, Guns & Money" – is devastating.

8/10



Stand In The Fire

ELEKTRA/RHINO, 1980

Thanks to hard-hitting, nuts-and-bolts bar band Boulder, this is an incendiary set. It starts amped up to 11 with the title song, and is even more intense by the time Zevon reaches the rampaging closing medley, "Poor Poor Pitiful Me"/"I'll Sleep When I'm Dead"/"Bo Diddley's A Gunslinger".

9/10

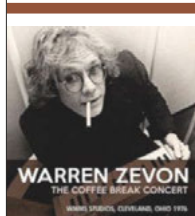


Learning To Flinch

GIANT, 1992
With his more commercial, band-driven years behind him, Zevon's one-man shows became experimental and improvisational. Always a nimble, inventive pianist, he integrated hypnotising, slash-and-dash guitars to fine effect. A 13-minute piano showcase/wrestling match with "Roland The Headless Thompson Gunner" is oddly definitive.

9/10

LUKE TORN



WARREN ZEVON The Coffee Break Concert: WMMS Studios, Cleveland, Ohio 1976

GOOD SHIP FUNKE

8/10

Werewolf at ground zero: fly-on-the-wall look into LA outsider's humble start

"I left out the strange verses," Warren Zevon chides upon winding down an unexpectedly stark, melancholy "Excitable Boy", the opening cut on this radio broadcast with Cleveland DJ Matt The Cat. That song, some two years away from being released, featured a murderous protagonist that surely unsettled discerning MOR FM radio listeners primed for, say, a mindless dose of peaceful, easy SoCal rock (maybe that's why Zevon chose to play it twice!). Then again, Zevon was always knee-deep in the subversive elements of the macabre peppering his cinematic narratives from the start. Even given superstar Linda Ronstadt's cover of "Poor Poor Pitiful Me", performed here, though, Zevon was a virtual unknown in 1976. The result – all solo, backing himself on piano – is a hungry, focused intensity, Zevon with something to prove, and delightfully reclaiming the songs' essence from their perfected studio renditions (though the DJ's commentary oddly both ingratiate and provides insight). "Mohammed's Radio", exuding a soulful heat, is radiant and gut-clenching; "Desperados Under The Eaves" and a cover of JD Souther's "Simple Man, Simple Dream" aren't far behind. In short, a lucky-to-have-it portrait of the man at the height of his powers.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN

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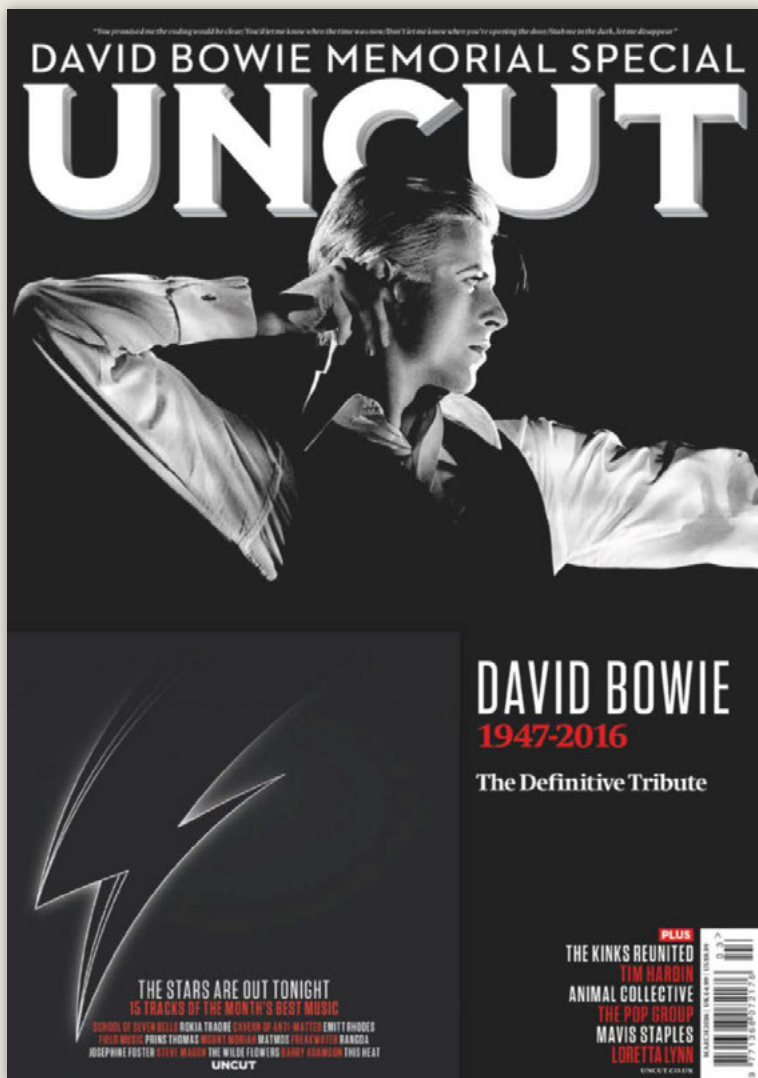
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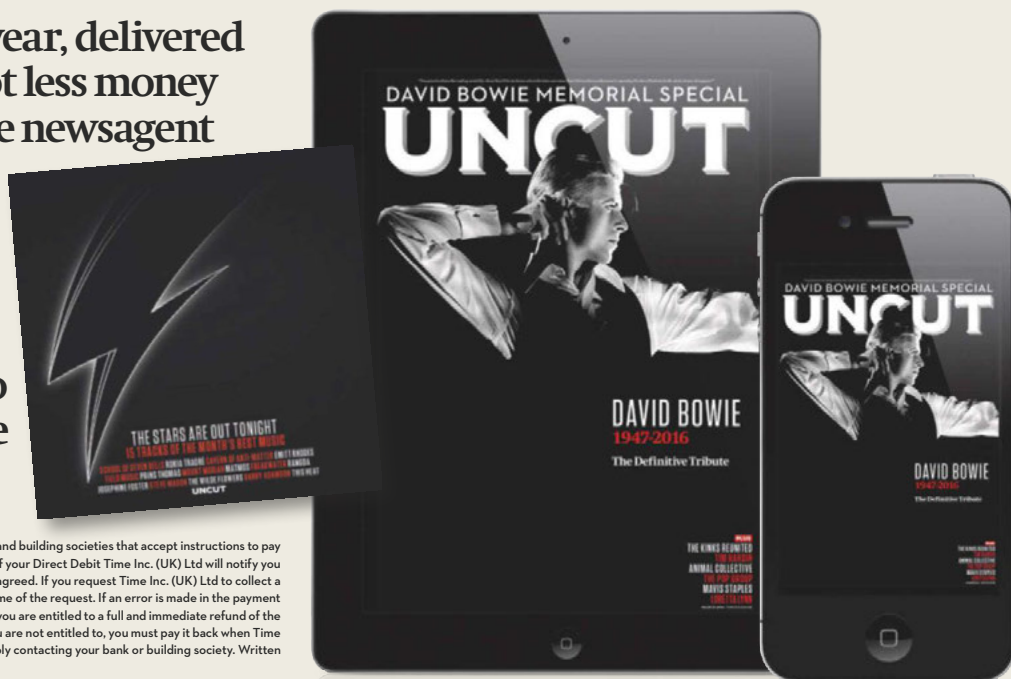
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THIS MONTH: TUBBY HAYES | JACQUES RIVETTE | FATS DOMINO



The Residents: making a song and dance of it beside the Golden Gate Bridge, 2015

is arguably The Residents' greatest hit – although most people who care enough to want to know long ago came to the conclusion that, despite denials, the men behind Cryptic Corp and the men behind the eyeballs were actually one and the same.

Members of Cryptic past and present – remaining duo Hardy Fox and Homer Flynn, departed colleagues Jay Clem and John Kennedy – all sit for interviews in director Don Hardy's film, and the strength of the documentary is its insider nature, although, as it goes on, this becomes its greatest weakness.

On the plus side, Hardy has free access to The Residents' archive, meaning plentiful clips from such brain-scrambling projects as the legendary, aborted "Vileness Fats", a projected 14-hour musical shot on rudimentary monochrome video in the early 1970s that sits roughly midway between 1920s Dada and David Lynch's early work.

Material from myriad video projects and live extravaganzas is the most stimulating stuff here, but the earliest, crummiest archive is perhaps the most striking of all: footage of their first live performance, when they stormed San Francisco folk hang-out The Boarding House in 1971, to bewilder singer-songwriter sensitivities with a performance that suggests an unrehearsed collision between their beloved Beefheart, The Fugs and the Bonzos. What's most startling today is

that they are unmasked – although the primitive video quality provides grainy cover.

As a narrative, however, only this earliest section holds together, charting how, far from being Paul and George getting back together for a lark, The Residents originated as school pals in the suffocatingly conservative Southern climes of 1950s-'60s Shreveport, Louisiana, then gravitated to California dreaming of psychedelia and getting laid. From here, the story slips frustratingly away.

With Hardy and his interviewees intent on maintaining that "The Residents" are not participating – Fox, Flynn, Clem and Kennedy refer to the band in the third person, and can only guess their motives and feelings – the insider nature results in them losing focus on the story. Events only fans will be aware of, such as the

early-1980s "bust-up" between The Residents and Cryptic, are referred to without explanation or even context. More damagingly, there is no overview of their output: what albums such as *Eskimo* are like, why they might matter, is never discussed.

As the roster of contributors suggests – everyone from *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening and comics guru Gary Panter, to magician Penn Jillette, Talking Heads'

Jerry Harrison and Devo's Jerry Casale – it's never less than interesting. But maybe an outside eyeball would have been of benefit.

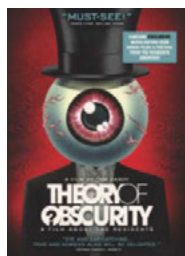
EXTRAS: A plethora of remastered clips of from **8/10** The Residents' video archive and extended interviews.

THEORY OF OBSCURITY

A Film About The Residents

FILM MOVEMENT/RSK

The eyeballs have it in fascinating overview of anti-music's longest, strangest trip. *By Damien Love*



7/10

subterranean, determinedly dissonant, stubbornly DIY activity, these enigmatic avant-garde anti-rock pioneers operating out of California have been responsible for some of the most distinctive, challenging, gleefully stupid and downright disturbing records ever released.

Nor because, stressing the visual as much as the aural, it's debatable whether they count as a "band" at all. Blurring artrock lines until they vanish, The Residents (proudly described here as "failed filmmakers") seem closer to a rotating multimedia art collective, one whose entire project could be categorised as a sustained, by turns prankish and sinister attack on rock's sacred cows – including the very idea of the band.

THESE DAYS, IF you threw a stick, you'd hit a dozen new music documentaries on figures great, cult and all-but unknown, and at least 10 would be worth watching. Even so, the appearance of a film telling the story of pre-punk post-punkers The Residents remains particularly tantalising. Not simply because, for over four decades of strange,

The reason a Residents documentary is especially intriguing is more basic, and more complicated: namely, how do you make a film about a group most famous for secrecy? Outside their devoted army of fans, The Residents are best known for their anonymity, never speaking, appearing only behind masks. Many self-respecting music nerds would be pushed to name one or two of their 50 or so studio albums, yet most could identify them as the guys who wear the massive eyeball-heads and top hats, like aliens from a paranoid 1950s sci-fi trying to blend in by dressing like Fred Astaire.

In the 1970s, when The Residents name first began to spread, fans swapped rumours that those masks hid famous faces: everyone from ex-Beatles (whose vandalised images adorned 1974's debut LP, *Meet The Residents*) to members of Talking Heads. By then, The Residents had acquired a management/PR company, The Cryptic Corporation, whose members acted as their representatives on Earth. That their true identities have never been revealed

Projects like the aborted musical "Vileness Fats" sit roughly between Dada and David Lynch's early work



FATS DOMINO The Big Beat

SHANACHIE

Piano pioneer gets due kudos
An extended PBS special, Joe Lauro's documentary celebrates Fats Domino as the most under-appreciated of the rock'n'roll

8/10

greats, despite a glorious 65-year career and his first million seller, "The Fat Man", predating the genre's birth. Raised in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, and tutoring himself on piano while delivering ice, Domino's music catches jazz and blues in an illicit embrace, never more thrillingly than on the extended version of "You Can Pack Your Suitcase", featured here, in full.

EXTRAS: PBS edit included.

6/10 ALASTAIR MCKAY



THE LAST PANTHERS

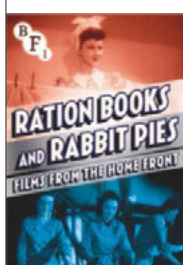
HBO

Promising heist series disappoints
With its hip cachet (Bowie theme tune; Warp Films provenance) and stellar cast (John Hurt; Samantha Morton), *The Last Panthers*, the tale of a diamond heist

6/10

by a Balkan gang, seemed a likely classic. As it turned out, its attempt at a *Wire*-style broad canvas, in which investigation of the crime pulls Morton's character into a world of corruption and personal demons, quickly became tedious. There were some poetic moments of bleakness, but the diffuse narrative meant the themes of family, loyalty and conflict ended up having to be rather hammered home.

EXTRAS: tbc
JOHN ROBINSON



RATION BOOKS AND RABBIT PIES: FILMS FROM THE HOME FRONT

BFI

Boiled cabbage for tea again!
Alternately charming, fascinating, hilarious and oddly moving, the BFI's latest spiffing

8/10

archive rummage collects a host of World War II public information and propaganda shorts, offering tips on cooking, growing veg, staying fit and making-do-and-mending. Cinephiles will treasure animation auteur Len Lye's *When The Pie Was Opened*, but the calm common sense will ring bells with anyone staring down austerity, even without the Blitz raging around your ears.

EXTRAS: Jolly decent booklet.

8/10 DAMIEN LOVE



THE JACQUES RIVETTE COLLECTION

ARROW

Rarities motherlode from French master

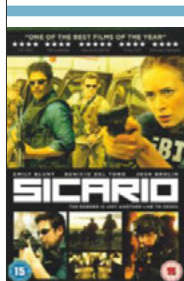
An important occasion, this 16-disc set makes available the rarest work by one of the French New Wave's finest. The main event is 1971's *Out 1*, a dense, elusive, trying, rewarding 13-hour

9/10

experience conceived for TV (but never broadcast), hitherto almost impossible to see except as the radically remixed, mere four-and-a-half-hour cut, *Out 1: Spectre* (also included). Concerning theatre, loners and a shadowy cabal in post-'68 Paris, this part-improvised collision between "reality" and fantasy is a mountain to be climbed. Rivette's *Duelle* (1976), *Norôit* (1976) and *Merry-Go-Round* (1981) are also included.

EXTRAS: Documentaries, interviews, booklet.

9/10 DAMIEN LOVE



SICARIO

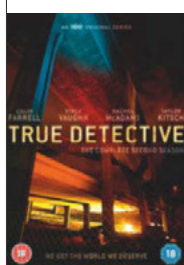
LIONSGATE HOME ENTERTAINMENT

Brooding, tense, drug cartel thriller
Emily Blunt stretched her wings from romantic comedy to high-quality action in Denis Villeneuve's suspenseful thriller. A work of tension and release, the film was an

7/10

epic trip into the landscape of *Breaking Bad*, following a Mexican drug cartel from an initial macabre discovery, into a complex world of shady government agencies and moral compromise, personified by Benicio Del Toro's CIA operative, Gillick. A brooding and occasionally explosive movie, its bigger picture was articulated by a menacing score, and some expertly orchestrated set pieces.

EXTRAS: Featurettes.
5/10 JOHN ROBINSON



TRUE DETECTIVE SEASON 2

HBO

Second series falls short...

Hard to imagine a show more eagerly anticipated than the second season of Nic Pizzolatto's anthology series. Vince Vaughn and Colin Farrell on shady moral

6/10

ground, as a land deal goes murderously wrong? We're there! Sadly, even with great performances, and a rich evocation of Los Angeles as a place of sprawl and sleaze, the show's lack of narrative purpose revealed its reliance on tropes from *Chinatown*, *LA Confidential*, even *Mulholland Drive*. As in the series itself, it was an unhappy ending – but there remained a glimmer of hope.

EXTRAS: Making Of, behind the scenes, commentaries.

6/10 JOHN ROBINSON



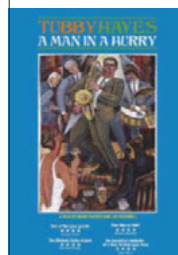
Tubby Hayes: blow by blow

TUBBY HAYES

A Man In A Hurry

MONO MEDIA

Sax magic. By Richard Williams



IN RONNIE SCOTT'S phrase, Tubby Hayes was a man with a predilection for "burning any and every available candle at both ends". That hectic urgency was immediately evident in his playing when he appeared on the British jazz scene at the start of the '50s as a teenage tenor saxophonist whose virtuosity would soon invite

8/10

comparison with the work of his American heroes.

Hayes died on an operating table in 1973, his body having given up the struggle against the excesses of which Scott spoke. He was 38, and his star had faded since the years when he won polls as if by right and was almost universally considered to be the British jazz musician most deserving of world stature. Neglected in the decades following his death, his reputation has been restored by a process involving CD releases of both long unavailable and newly unearthed material, and a recent biog – Simon Spillett's *The Long Shadow Of The Little Giant* – meticulous and sensitive enough to be considered definitive. Now comes this hour-long film, in which writer Mark Baxter and director Lee Cogswell reconstruct Hayes' life from a wealth of archive film and the testimony of contemporaries, including saxophonist Bobby Wellins, poet Michael Horovitz, painter Peter Blake and clothes shop owner John Simons, and younger admirers who discovered his merits posthumously, such as Spillett and Robert Elms. The film outlines his early progress from the bands of Kenny Baker and Bert Ambrose, to his own small groups and big bands, notably the celebrated Jazz Couriers, which he co-led with Scott. If British jazz musicians of their generation aspired to little more than an accurate copy of the music's leaders on the other side of the Atlantic, Hayes' fluency and inventiveness allowed him to transcend imitation, his musicianship also encompassing mastery of flute and vibraphone

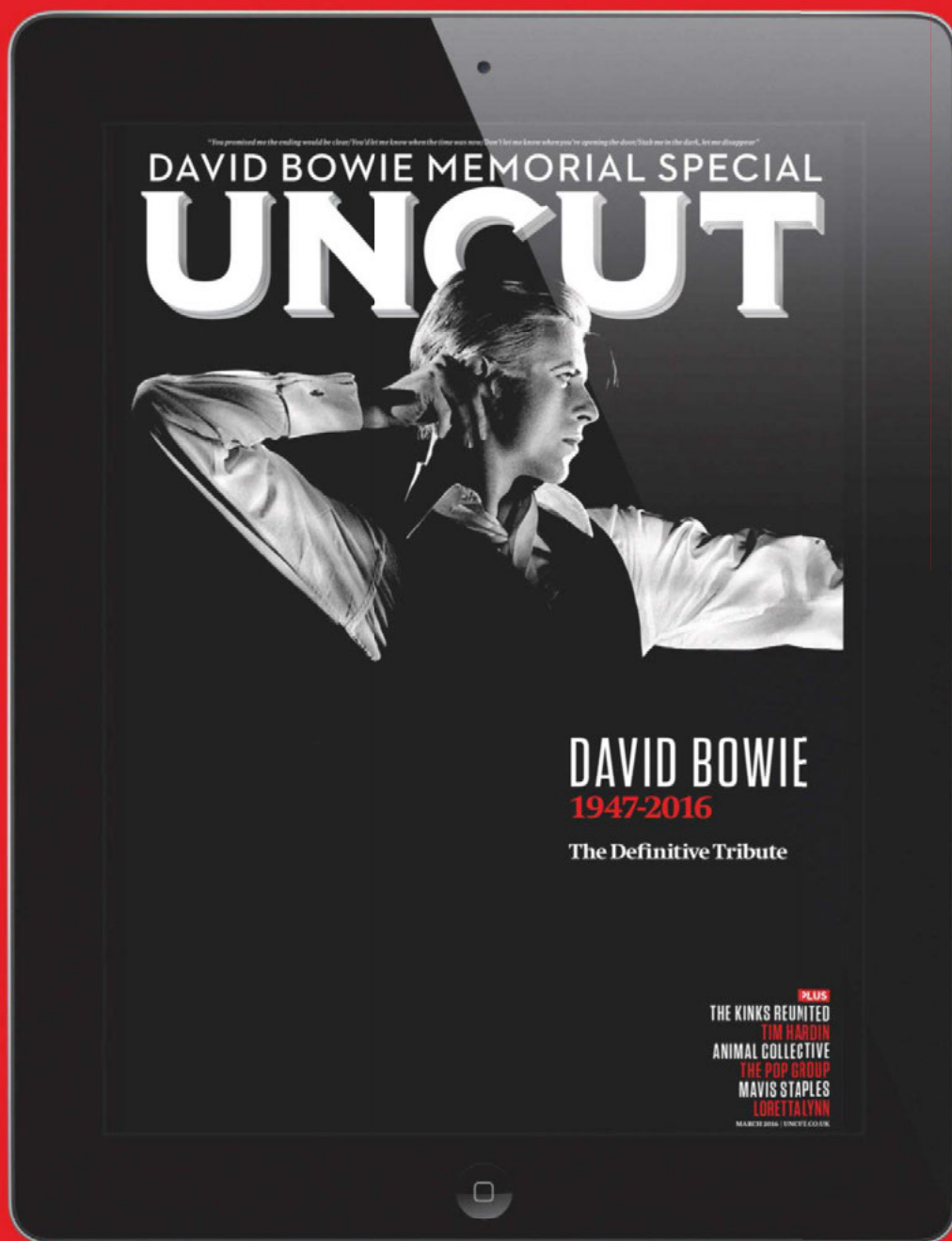
Some of the claims made here are a little too strident, but had heroin and other damaging habits not derailed his life, it would've been fascinating to see how he got on in an era when British jazz finally claimed its own identity. In the year before his death there was a hint of a possible future when he was invited to join Splinters, in which he and a couple of bop-era peers – pianist Stan Tracey and drummer Phil Seamen – improvised freely with members of the Spontaneous Music Ensemble. Deprived of the customary harmonic guidelines, he sounded surprisingly at home, happily trading provocative ideas with representatives of a newer generation. For sure, there would have been more of that to come.

EXTRAS: Meet The Filmmakers...

5/10

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Films

BY MICHAEL BONNER

This month: Ryan Gosling and co's banking-crisis comedy; Janis Joplin uncovered; Tilda Swinton in Euro drama remake; women's motor racing in the West Bank; Hitchcock vs Truffaut

The **Big Short** Towards the end of director Adam McKay's new film, two characters stand on the empty trading floor of Lehman Brothers bank following the 2008 crash. "What did you expect to find?" asks one. His colleague shrugs. "I don't know. Grown-ups?" McKay's adaptation of Michael Lewis' book of the same name presents the subprime loan crisis as a screwball comedy, complete with to-camera asides. But perhaps the only sane response to the loathsome skullduggery behind the 2008 financial crash is to laugh at it. Just as Martin Scorsese's *The Wolf of Wall Street* presented the career of disgraced Wall Street stockbroker Jordan Belfort as a madcap scramble, so McKay pumps this particular round of despicable financial misconduct for all the laughs he can. *The Wolf of Wall Street* is a useful comparison. McKay brings a similar flexible narrative and freewheeling style of filming to *The Big Short* – the flashbacks, freeze frames, jumpcuts and multiple voiceovers familiar from many Scorsese films. All it needs is a montage sequence edited to "Gimme Shelter" to qualify for the Full Marty.

Unlike Belfort – whose crimes largely took place in the '80s – the subprime loan crisis is still a recent memory. How, then, do you make a scenario that left millions in America unemployed and homeless palatable to mainstream cinema audiences? McKay tries to overcome this by focusing on four characters who, while seeking to cash in on the crisis, qualify as outsider figures. His leads are two eccentric hedge fund managers – one-eyed Michael Burry (Christian Bale) and the Cartman-esque Mark Baum (Steve Carell) – plus permanent Deutsche Bank employee, Jared Vennett (Ryan Gosling), and a retired trader Ben Rickert (Brad Pitt). Only Baum and Vennett interact on screen. Burry is largely contained within the four walls of his office – a situation that suits his chilly, awkward character. Baum is McKay's *de facto* lead: a ball of incandescent rage, routinely sent into paroxysms at the unfolding chicanery of



"It's all your fault!" Ryan Gosling (far right), as trader Jared Vennett, feels the heat in Adam McKay's *The Big Short*

the financial institutions. After *Foxcatcher* last year, Carrell continues to deliver solid dramatic work. Pitt's Rickert – shuffling, dishevelled and shapeless – recalls Philip Seymour Hoffman. Gosling seems to be playing a parody of himself.

McKay's attempts to cover so much ground is not entirely successful. Cutting to Margot Robbie in a bath to explain subprime loans or celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain in his kitchen to talk through Collateralised Debt Obligations are neat tricks, in keeping with the film's skittish, exhilarating pace. But it becomes apparent that Burry, Baum and the rest are no better than the bankers themselves, regardless of how they are presented. The history of cinema is littered with bad guys, from Tony Camonte to Darth Vader; the difference is, unlike the banking community, they got their comeuppance.

► **Janis: Little Girl Blue** Forty-five years after Janis Joplin died, a biopic has never been made about her life. That's not to say there haven't been attempts – over the years, Renée Zellweger, Pink, Zoëy Deschanel, Brittany Murphy and Amy Adams have all, at one time, been attached to various failed projects. Speaking to *Uncut* a few

months ago, the documentary filmmaker Amy Berg admitted, "As a woman in the '27 club', she is remembered different from the men. I think Janis suffered from her legacy having to do more with her drug overdose than her career and musical abilities. She just got the star on the Walk Of Fame, I think, two years ago." Berg's film is as much a celebration of Joplin's music as it is a depiction of a freer, looser time and Joplin's place within that environment. Shortly before her death in 1970, she returned to her hometown of Port Arthur, Texas to attend a high school reunion. In footage from that visit, she confessed, "I didn't go to the high school prom." Pressed by reporters as whether she was invited to attend, she replied, "No, I wasn't. I don't think they wanted to take me. And I've been suffering ever since!" Joplin's insecurities – stemming from her troubled childhood – were amplified as her success increased. Hard drugs were readily available and used casually. "We would get together and do heroin in these peoples' rooms and just kind of, not nod off or go to sleep, but have really nice, mellow conversations," recalls Big Brother And The Holding Company guitarist Sam Andrew. Berg's strongest suit are the singer's

Reviewed this month...



THE BIG SHORT

Director Adam McKay
Starring Steve Carell, Christian Bale
Opened Jan 22
Cert 15
7/10



JANIS: LITTLE GIRL BLUE

Director Amy Berg
Starring Janis Joplin, Chan Marshall
Opens February 5
Cert tbc
7/10



A BIGGER SPLASH

Director Luca Guadagnino
Starring Tilda Swinton, Ralph Fiennes
Opens February 12
Cert tbc
7/10



SPEED SISTERS

Director Amber Fares
Starring Noor Daoud, Marah Zahalka
Opens March 25
Cert tbc
8/10



HITCHCOCK/ TRUFFAUT

Director Kent Jones
Starring Martin Scorsese, David Fincher
Opens March 4
Cert tbc
7/10



private correspondence she wrote to her family, which act as the film's narration, read in voiceover by Chan Marshall.

► **A Bigger Splash** Following an operation on her vocal chords, rock star Marianne Lane (Tilda Swinton) is recuperating with her partner (Matthias Schoenaerts) on a remote Italian island. Their sunny idyll is interrupted by Harry, Marianne's producer and former beau, who arrives unexpectedly with Penelope (Dakota Johnson), who he claims is his daughter. Harry – played with a loose abandon by Ralph Fiennes – is an avuncular presence, full of tales about his time working with the Stones. In one of the film's most memorable sequences, Harry concocts a hilarious, Jagger-style dance routine to “Emotional Rescue”. But despite his endearingly ramshackle charm, Harry still harbours feelings for Marianne and as director Luca Guadagnino's film unfolds in the parched Mediterranean splendour, it becomes clear that there is more to his visit than just *al fresco* dining with friends and another marvellous yarn about Charlie Watts.

Guadagnino's film is a remake of *La Piscine*, a languid Euro drama from 1969 that starred Alain Delon, Romy Schneider, Maurice Ronet and Jane Birkin. But while Guadagnino keeps intact the sultry dynamics between the four players, the most memorable work here is done by Swinton and Fiennes. In flashbacks, Lane is revealed as a Bowie-esque glam rocker, complete with silver jumpsuit. In the present day, Lane's post-op silence provides a graceful counterpoint to Harry's endless banter.

► **Speed Sisters** During an interview with Canadian broadcaster TSN, in January this year,

Formula One chief executive Bernie Ecclestone was asked whether he envisaged a time when female drivers might feature on the grid. “I doubt it,” he said. “If there was somebody that was capable they wouldn't be taken seriously anyway, so they would never have a car that is capable of competing.” In Amber Fares' film, female drivers have a lot more to contend with than simply the regressive views of Ecclestone. The Speed Sisters are the first women's driving team in the Arab world. Fares' compelling documentary follows manager Maysoon and drivers Mona, Marah, Noor and Betty as they navigate not just the dusty market squares of Palestine – where many of their races take place – but also life under occupation. Their practice ground is a stretch of wasteland near an Israeli detention centre: at one point, one of the drivers is struck in the back by a tear gas canister.

Speed Sisters is a film about a clash of generations and of cultures. While delighted to receive offers from German magazines keen to arrange photo shoots, they receive Facebook posts commenting, “This is a sign that the world is coming to an end”. In one sequence, Maysoon is stuck in a checkpoint queue when a commotion begins ahead. “The smell of tear gas reminds me of my childhood,” she says.

► **Hitchcock/Truffaut** In 1966, François Truffaut published a series of interviews with Alfred Hitchcock about his career, film by film. “At that time, the general consensus and climate was of bullying, as usual, by the establishment as to what serious cinema was,” says Martin Scorsese. “So it was really revolutionary. Based on what the *Hitchcock/Truffaut* book was, we became radicalised as filmmakers. It was almost as if someone had taken a weight off our shoulders and said, ‘Yes, we can embrace this. We can go.’” Scorsese is not alone in offering glowing testimony to the book's influence – peers Paul Schrader and Peter Bogdanovich are joined by younger directors Wes Anderson, David Fincher and Richard Linklater. Director Kent Jones' accessible documentary presents the *Hitchcock/Truffaut* book as a cornerstone of contemporary cinema, without which modern movies from *Jaws* to *Gone Girl* wouldn't exist. It also addresses a pivotal piece of cinema history – the interviews themselves, which took place over a week at Hitchcock's offices at Universal Studios in 1962 – when the 63-year-old Hitchcock was a household name and Truffaut, 33 years his junior, had made only three films. The French New Wave's fascination with Hitchcock did much to bolster his critical reputation; and subsequently what interested the French New Wave had a wide-ranging influence on the generations that followed. “This is somebody whose mind is racing with ideas, which is why we refer to him all the time,” says Anderson. But there is more to Hitchcock than his fathomless ingenuity and craft. Despite his revered status, Hitchcock was hardly a benevolent patriarch. His films mischievously carried murder and madness to mainstream cinema audiences. As the Japanese director Kiyoshi Kurosawa notes, “He portrayed himself as a mainstream figure, but he's really at the farthest edge of things.”

Also out...

THE AMERICAN DREAMER

OPENS FEBRUARY 5

From 1971. Little seen Dennis Hopper doc, shot at his home in Taos, New Mexico while working on *The Last Movie*.

DAD'S ARMY

OPENS FEBRUARY 5

Toby Jones is Captain Mainwaring and Bill Nighy plays Sgt Wilson in update of classic sitcom. “Don't tell him, Pike!” etc.

LEE “SCRATCH” PERRY'S VISION OF PARADISE

OPENS FEBRUARY 5

Shot over a 15-year period, director Volker Schaner reveals Perry's unique wisdom and insights. The Orb, Adrian Sherwood and other dubologists pay tribute.

POINT BREAK

OPENS FEBRUARY 5

Kathryn Bigelow's moderately forgettable early-'90s actioner is remade, with surfing updated to extreme sports.

TRUMBO

OPENS FEBRUARY 5

An Oscar nomination for Bryan Cranston as a blacklisted Hollywood screenwriter. Reviewed last issue.



DEADPOOL

OPENS FEBRUARY 10

Marvel Comics' latest, possibly more grown-up than usual. Stars Ryan Reynolds as a former Special Forces operative hunting down the bad guys.

ZOOLANDER 2

OPENS FEBRUARY 12

Looking to reconnect with mainstream audiences after *While We're Young*, Ben Stiller revives his clueless male model for more laffs. Well, the trailer looks good.

BONE TOMAHAWK

OPENS FEBRUARY 19

Sheriff Kurt Russell leads the posse in S Craig Zahler's moody cannibal Western. Reviewed last issue.

MAVIS!

OPENS FEBRUARY 19

Doc charting singer Mavis Staples' life and times, from the gospel sound she helped pioneer in the 1950s to the present day. See Album By Album, page 44.

GRIMSBY

OPENS FEBRUARY 24

Sacha Baron Cohen plays the idiotic younger brother to Mark Strong's suave MI6 hitman in this action-comedy.

Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD

STICK IN THE WHEEL

WHAT'S COOKIN', LEYTONSTONE EX-SERVICEMEN'S CLUB, LONDON, JANUARY 6, 2016

From the London riots to 18th-century laments on English injustice, the critically acclaimed band bring folk back home

AUTHENTICITY HAS long been a contentious issue in folk music. From its politicised post-war revival, through Dylan turning electric, and this century's appropriation of the term by anyone strumming a guitar, it continues to be elusive. *fRoots* Album Of The Year winners Stick In The Wheel's solution is to sing centuries-old songs that connect them as directly as possible to their own London history, along

with new songs of their own that share the same spirit. Although their debut LP, *From Here*, mixed revivalist instincts with folk-punk attack, at heart they're not that different from, say, the Unthanks, Martin Carthy or Ewan MacColl, whose rollicking truckers' song "I'm Champion At Keeping 'Em Rolling" is sung tonight. They're not reinventing the wheel, but keeping it turning.

A decade ago, lead singer Nicola Kearey and guitarist Ian Carter were

in dubsteppers Various Production. While splicing folk music with new styles such as grime (Jim Moray's reboot of murder ballad "Lucy Wan") can be occasionally effective, it is not something Kearey has much truck with. She draws from the city's folk songs for their strengthening depth of time and place.

Stick In The Wheel's roots are in East London and Essex, so this regular night at Leytonstone's Ex-Servicemen's Club offers a rich hometown context. *From Here* was mostly recorded around here, and accordingly the venue is packed out. "This song's about Epping Forest..." says Kearey, introducing "All The Things" to cheers before adding: "... being burned down." Her deadpan links suggest – perhaps erroneously – that she is grumpy and uncomfortable onstage.

"Hard Times" is an exception. Dating from the 18th century, and since passed by the Copper Family, the song locates injustice growing naturally in our soil. "It's not a rose-coloured vision," Kearey explains. "It's about how shit England was. And it's still shit." She is joined on harmonies by Fran Foote (who is

SET LIST

- 1 Rigs/Marrabones
- 2 Common Ground
- 3 Me'n'Becky
- 4 Hard Times
- 5 All The Things
- 6 I'm Champion At...
- 7 The Blacksmith
- 8 Four Loom Weaver
- 9 By Of River
- 10 Poor Old Man/Bows Of London
- 11 Hasp
- 12 Bedlam
- ENCORE
- 13 Seven Gypsies
- 14 Jail Song
- 15 Barbara Allen

from a Copper-style lineage of Essex folk singers) and by Foote's husband Si on percussion, who help grow the song into a stately lament. Written during the Napoleonic era, its message is still relevant and powerful in a modern setting.

The more contemporary "Me'n' Becky" is a great song about the 2011 London riots. "*Strangest shopping I'd ever seen*," its protagonist observes. "*No-one got a receipt*," Fran Foote's concertina adds to a sweeping sense of exhilaration during the riots before the mood changes to reflect the subsequent guilt at the burned-down shops and, finally, a retaliatory response by the authorities. The lack of such stories in mainstream pop is a loss. As are Kearey and Foote's working-class accents. When they sing "*we come from here*" in "By Of River" and of "*taking the things that belong to me*" on "Common Ground", they seem to be suggesting it is possible to be exiled in the country where you're born.

Stick In The Wheel don't say anything heavily, though. "The Blacksmith" is a ballad of lost love sung with as much aching feeling as "Four Loom Weaver", a terrible tale of poverty, with its shocking line, "*I've held my tongue till I've near lost my breath*." There's an intimate sense of community as they chat and sing, reflected in modest music which plays to all the genre's strengths.

NICK HASTED

ADRIAN CALLAGHAN

Stick In The Wheel at a local old folk home

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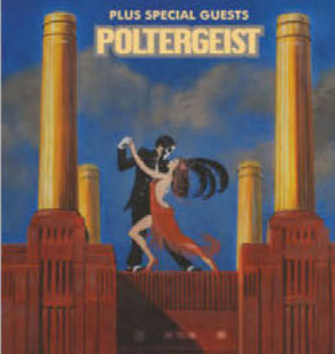
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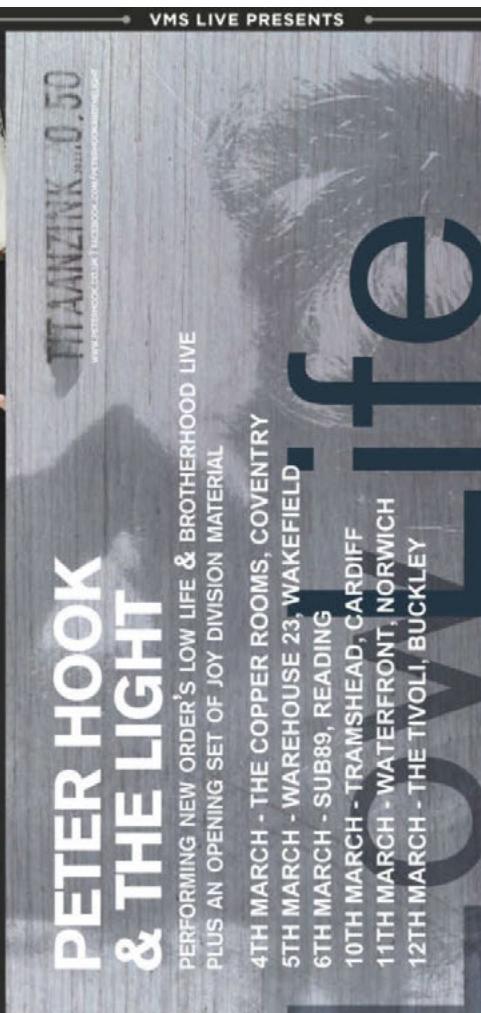
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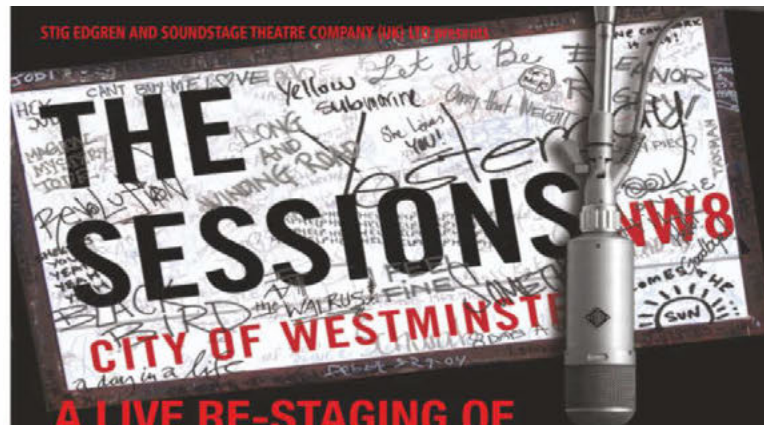
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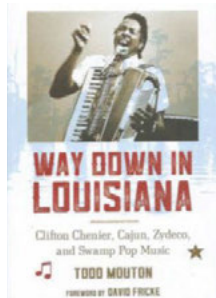
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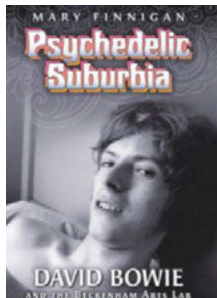
Reviewed this month...



Way Down in Louisiana: Clifton Chenier, Cajun, Zydeco And Swamp Pop Music

Todd Mouton
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA
AT LAFAYETTE PRESS

8/10



Psychedelic Suburbia: David Bowie And The Beckenham Arts Lab

Mary Finnigan
JORYIK PRESS

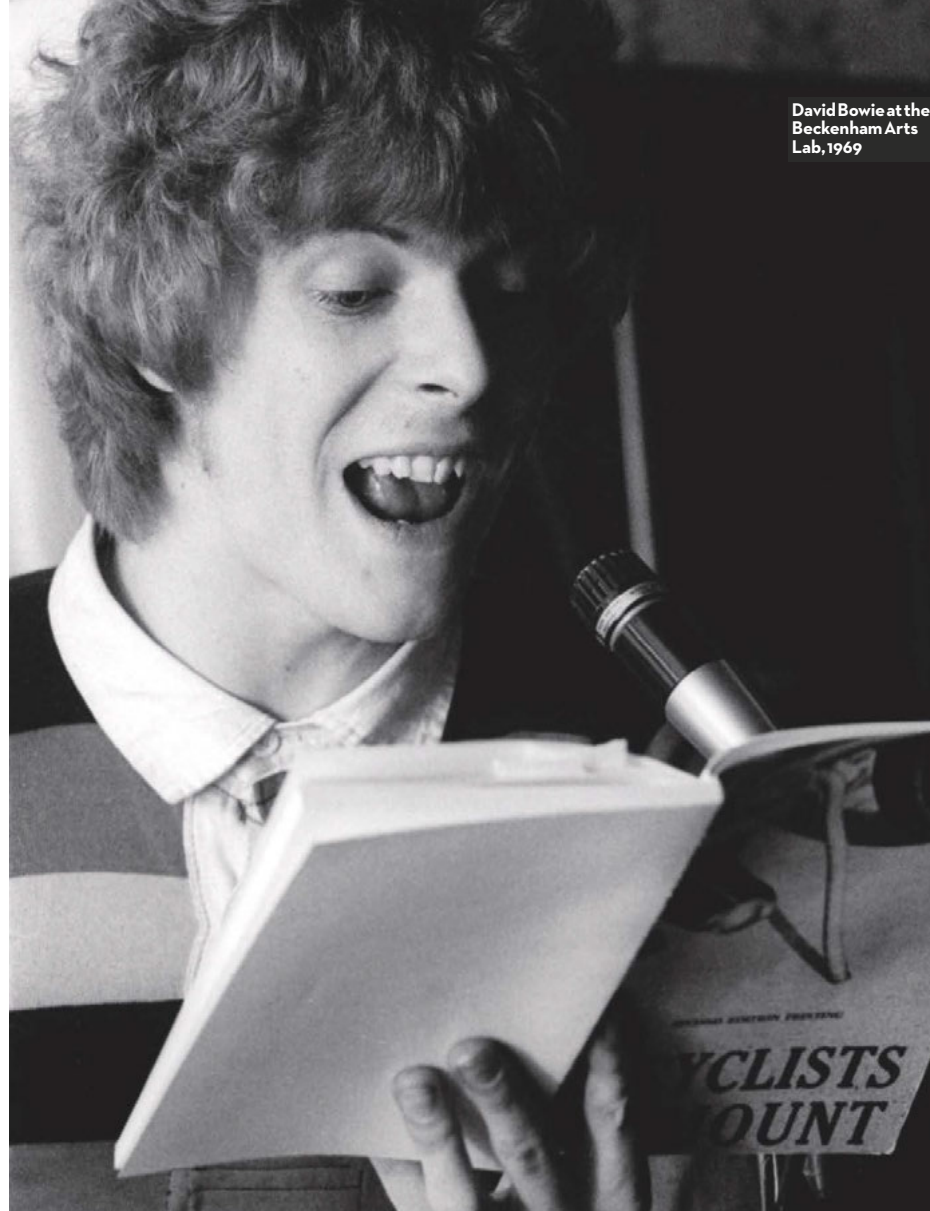
7/10

YOU KIND OF hope from its title that Todd Mouton's *Way Down In Louisiana: Clifton Chenier, Cajun, Zydeco And Swamp Music* will be a full biography of the great Zydeco bandleader or otherwise a comprehensive history of the musical traditions he did so much to popularise. In the event, it's a bit of both and not quite enough of either.

Most histories of Louisiana music concentrate not irrelevantly on New Orleans. But as *Rolling Stone's* David Fricke remarks in a typically well-turned introduction, New Orleans "is just one deep pocket of blues and giving in a greater state of song and sharing". West of New Orleans and to the north of the vast Atchafalaya Basin swamp that once cut south Louisiana in half is the territory called Acadiana, settled in the mid-18th century by Canadian immigrants, driven out of northwest Canada by the British army, their reluctant exile poignantly evoked by The Band in their last great song, "Acadian Driftwood". Their descendants, known as Cajuns, mixed with the indigenous population and slaves freed after the American Civil War to create a fiercely protected independent culture, out of which two musical styles evolved, basically defined by race: the mostly fiddle-led Cajun of white culture and its African American equivalent, Zydeco. This was the accordion-driven rhythm and blues that its greatest modern exponent, Chenier; the son of a sharecropper, born into poverty near Opelousas on Louisiana's isolated coastal prairie, brought to the world.

Something like half of the book consists of recycled magazine articles about some of the contemporary musicians who have been inspired by Chenier, musical preservationists like BeauSoleil ("the world's greatest Cajun band"), Coteau ("the Cajun Grateful Dead") and Cajun supergroup Lil' Band Of Gold ("the southern Louisiana Buena Vista Social Club"). Mouton devotes four long chapters to Chenier's life and career and writes well about landmark albums like *Louisiana Blues And Zydeco* (1965), *Black Snake Blues* (1967), *Out West* (1974), the blistering *The King Of Zydeco Live At Montreux* (1975) and *Clifton Chenier And His Red Hot Louisiana Band* (1977). The basic facts of Chenier's life are all here. But as biography, these chapters seem like an extended chronological timeline punctuated with record reviews.

Mouton gives us very little sense of the man beyond the music. Chenier was a charismatic performer, a demanding bandleader, reminiscent



David Bowie at the Beckenham Arts Lab, 1969

from various descriptions of Bruce Springsteen. His repertoire was vast. Four-hour sets were not unusual and, like Springsteen, he didn't tolerate sloppiness, missed cues or dropped beats. He toured relentlessly, up to his death in December 1987. He must also have been a smart businessman as a canny self-promoter, who managed his own career, largely on his own terms, and you want to know more about how he prospered in an industry dominated by racial prejudice and unscrupulous practice. The influence on Chenier of Cajun and Zydeco pioneers like Amédée Ardoin and Dennis McGee, Hector Dubon, Alphonse "Bois Sec" Ardoin and Dewey Balfa are also only fleetingly mentioned. By the book's end, the full story of the musical tradition that Chenier was heir to remains tantalisingly untold. There is much to enjoy and discover here, but it still feels like an opportunity missed, however narrowly.

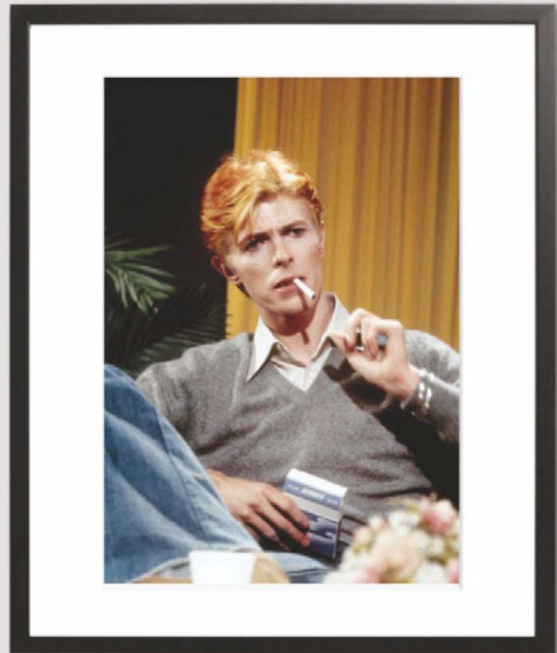
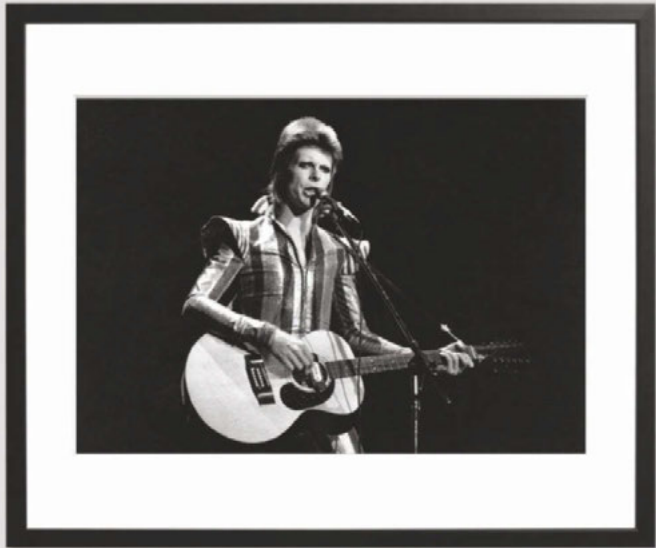
➤ Originally intended to coincide with David Bowie's 69th birthday, but now published at the time of his death, Mary Finnigan's *Psychedelic Suburbia: David Bowie And The Beckenham Arts Lab* is a slight but knowingly eye-catching memoir of the nine months in 1969 when Bowie was first Finnigan's lodger, briefly her lover and very quickly someone she no longer recognised, as he mutated from woolly-haired troubadour to glam rock superstar. Finnigan moved to London in the early '60s to escape a dull marriage to a much older Cheshire businessman, renting a ground floor flat at 24 Foxgrove Road in Beckenham. She first met Bowie in April 1969, when he was visiting her upstairs neighbours. She offers him "tea and some tincture of cannabis" and he sits at her kitchen table, gets stoned and asks her if he can play her a new song that turns out to be "Space Oddity". Bowie at the time is living at home with his parents in nearby

Bromley. But he's charismatic, charming and sexy and Finnigan is immediately smitten. He soon moves into her flat and her bed and, although she can't really afford it, she starts supporting him financially. To make some money, they start a folk club at a local pub, the Three Tuns, later the Beckenham Arts Lab, sweetly recalled by Finnigan as a suburban mecca for countercultural activity, a bit of Haight-Ashbury in the Home Counties.

The book's tone is apparently nostalgic, a special time in her life recalled in a wallowing glow. The genteel prose barely disguises, however, the resentment she feels when she discovers Bowie has been merely using her while he tries to re-boot his career after the failure of his debut album. She had assumed she was in a monogamous relationship with Bowie, although she finds out later that she's merely one of several simultaneous lovers, including a Chinese-American A&R man, mime artist Lindsay Kemp and a 19-year old American girl called Mary Angela Barnett, soon to be Angie Bowie. In Finnigan's description, Angie is "part angel, part hellcat", wholly cunning and entirely manipulative, prone to ballistic hissy fits, theatrical strops, carefully calculated tantrums, anything to get her own way. Surprisingly, the two women get on well enough to end up in bed together.

After the success of "Space Oddity", Bowie and Angie move into Haddon Hall, where Bowie works on *The Man Who Sold The World*, *Hunky Dory* and the life-changing *Ziggy Stardust...* By now, Finnigan's a bystander to his accelerating career, excluded from his inner circle. Leaving a party at Haddon Hall to celebrate a Ziggy show at Earls Court, Bowie takes her aside. "Goodbye, Mary," he tells her. "I'll never forget you." She never saw him again, and 45 years later is still incredulously miffed that she was so easily discarded from the rest of his life.

RAY STEVENSON/REX SHUTTERSTOCK



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Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...



Lemmy in 1982: "Rock'n'roll's had a good time out of me"

LEMMY

Hawkwind and Motörhead legend

(1945-2015)

FOR OVER 50 years, Lemmy, who has died aged 70, personified the rock'n'roll experience. His discography as a founder member of Motörhead, the band he led for 40 years, is a ragged compendium of fast and often artful heavy music, the product of an intelligent man leading a fast and heavy lifestyle.

Born Ian Fraser Kilmister, the son of an RAF chaplain, Lemmy walked it like he talked it: gruffly and generally wryly, all integrity and no regrets. A laconic, witty speaker, he offered the kind of eloquence you could have tattooed on your arm. "I've had a good time out of rock'n'roll," he told *Uncut* last year, of his unique career path. "And rock'n'roll's had a good time out of me."

His was a life lived with an eccentric purpose, and it birthed a powerful legend. Lemmy could terrify Motörhead audiences away from disrespectful behaviour, always stood his ground, but was secure in occasionally sending himself up, which only served his notoriety. A TV advertisement from the 1980s had Lemmy "caught" receiving backstage pension advice via telephone, then hastily arranging for his bath to be filled with tequila.

Lemmy's 2003 memoir *White Line Fever* detailed entertainingly how this legend came to be. A free spirit, Lemmy was never destined for long-term commitments other than to rock'n'roll, and pursuit of its raucous essence led him into the orbit of bands of the British beat boom. An intimate of The Birds and The Artwoods, Lemmy was a member of Manchester's riotous Rockin' Vickers, roadied for Jimi Hendrix, played in the gently psychedelic Sam Gopal, before alighting in his first major band, Hawkwind.

To Hawkwind, Lemmy brought the musicality at the root of the band's lysergic swing. To the band's surprise, he also became the vocalist on their Top 10 hit "Silver Machine". On 1972's live "Orgone Accumulator", during which the band play a 10-minute psychedelic garage tribute to Wilhelm Reich, Lemmy's bluesy runs and bass chords bring a sense of space to a piece with potentially ungenerous dimensions. The performance, he explained in his book, took place under the influence of drugs. He had been told if he took more than a few paces forward, he would fall into the audience.

Drugs, which he became in later life reluctant to discuss, were instrumental in his departure from Hawkwind, and in creating the role for which he became best known. While some of Hawkwind used psychedelics, Lemmy used amphetamines. His '75 composition "Motorhead", (written about the speed lifestyle for the Hawkwind LP *Warrior On The Edge Of Time*)

became the cornerstone of his next project when he was eventually ejected from that band.

From 1975-1982, Motörhead offered a megatonne take on Leiber & Stoller-style rock'n'roll. Their furious pace and well-concealed musicianship turned the band from anomalies of the UK underground to unlikely chart stars, and Lemmy into an unlikely national hero. "Ace Of Spades" became their anthem, but their repertoire contained a wealth of classics, and their 1981 *No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith* live LP was a No 1. After the breakup in 1982 of Motörhead's classic lineup (featuring Lemmy alongside guitarist "Fast" Eddie Clarke and drummer

Phil "Philthy Animal" Taylor), the band lost some of their roll. However, sustained by Lemmy's enduring interests in sex, drugs and warfare, they never lost their subject matter, or their rock. Respectful of his past, his music and what it represented to the people he played it for, Lemmy became as close as career irresponsibility was likely to get to an establishment figure. Late in life, Lemmy moderated (somewhat) his lifestyle, but never changed his belief in rock'n'roll as an ethos: a recreation worth believing in, an escape from the drabness of the everyday. **JOHN ROBINSON**

Lemmy never changed his belief in rock'n'roll as an escape from the everyday

OBITUARIES

BRETT SMILEY

Cult US glam rocker

(1955-2016)

Brett Smiley brought a dangerous theatricality to glam rock, albeit briefly. A former child star – he appeared in *Oliver!* on Broadway – Smiley moved to LA and auditioned for The Partridge Family, before falling in with Andrew Loog Oldham. At 18, Smiley signed a £200,000 publishing deal and flew to London, where he released the single “Va Va Va Voom” and appeared on *The Russell Harty Show*. His sole LP, *Breathlessly Brett*, was recorded in 1974, but not issued until 2003. “That music was of my heart and soul...” he told *Uncut*’s Phil King “...and the glamour and the glitter.”

NATALIE COLE

American soul/R&B singer

(1950-2015)

Nat King Cole’s daughter was a great

singer in her own right. In the mid-’70s, she released a clutch of funky pop-soul albums including Grammy-winning debut *Inseparable* (1975) and *Natalie* (1976), each led by its own US R&B No 1 – “This Will Be” and “Sophisticated Lady (She’s A Different Lady)” respectively. She suffered with drug addiction, and a spell in rehab in the mid-’80s signalled a career switch. Thereafter, she majored on big pop balladry and standards, typified by global hits such as “Miss You Like Crazy”, Springsteen cover “Pink Cadillac” and the computer-aided “interactive duet” with her deceased father, “Unforgettable”.

JOHN BRADBURY

Specials drummer

(1953-2015)

As drummer for The Specials, Coventry-bred John “Brad” Bradbury was a key architect of the 2 Tone ska sound. He called his

approach to percussion “attack drumming” and, according to bandmate bassist Horace Panter, he “mixed the drive of Northern soul with a reggae feel”. Brad joined The Specials in 1979 and played on their two peerless studio albums. He moved on to The Special AKA with Jerry Dammers in 1982 and co-wrote tracks including “Racist Friend” for 1984’s *In The Studio* LP. Brad was later a prime mover in the reformed Specials lineup in 2008. His own band – the Motown-influenced JB’s Allstars – also toured and recorded extensively.

GARY “MAGIC” MARKER

Bassist and recording engineer

(1943-2015)

California-born and trained at



The Specials’ John Bradbury: “a key architect of the 2 Tone ska sound”

Berklee College Of Music in Boston, Gary Marker was a highly skilled session musician and recording engineer, and a key influence on the early career of Captain Beefheart. His first band, the Columbia-signed Rising Sons, was a rival act to The Byrds during



Paul Bley, circa 1960: “lyrical, angular and endlessly inventive”

PAUL BLEY

Canadian avant-garde jazz musician

(1932-2016)

TO CALL PAUL Bley a jazz pianist fails to recognise his huge contribution to jazz over a six-decade career – or the influence he had in bringing other artists to prominence, including Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry and Bley’s first wife, composer and organist Carla Bley. Born in Montreal, Bley attended the renowned McGill Conservatory as a child – but it was jazz that bewitched him, and no less a figure than Oscar Peterson asked the 16-year-old Bley to deputise for him at a gig in his home city. Bley co-founded the Montreal Jazz workshop, and while still in his teens was working with Charlie Parker and Lester Young. In 1953, he was invited by Charles Mingus to help record his 10-piece group. To repay the favour, Mingus played on and released Bley’s first album, *Introducing Paul Bley*, on Mingus’ own Debut label – completing a formidable trio with drummer Art Blakey.

In the mid-’50s, Bley met and married Swedish/American Lovella May Borg – later to be known as Carla – and the pair moved to California. A long-term residency at the Hillcrest Club in LA signalled the formation of Bley’s first great group: a quintet completed by Coleman, Cherry, Charlie Haden and Billy Higgins. *Live At The Hillcrest Club 1958* was not issued until the ’70s, but it is a key text in the free jazz movement, critic Robert Christgau noting: “I have the feeling when I want people to understand what free jazz meant, this is what I’ll play.”

Bley’s work throughout the ’60s and ’70s illustrated his ability to move Zelig-like through the changing worlds of avant-garde jazz. He co-founded the Jazz Composers Guild in 1964, bringing together luminaries such as Archie Shepp, Sun Ra and Cecil Taylor, organising a weekly live show that explored jazz’s outer limits. He toured and recorded with Sonny Rollins and Coleman Hawkins and was one of the first musicians to pioneer the use of the Moog synthesiser. Bley’s own label, Improvising Artists, issued the earliest recordings of Jaco Pastorius and Pat Metheny. Recent decades saw him continuing to tour, teach and record. His vast discography stretches to in excess of 60 albums, including 2014 solo set *Play Blue*, on ECM.

As a musician, he was lyrical, angular and endlessly inventive. In Bley’s own words: “Anything you play twice is once too much.”

PIERRE BOULEZ

French composer and conductor

(1925-2016)

“A NY MUSICIAN WHO has not experienced the necessity of dodecaphonic music is USELESS.” The son of an engineer from the Loire, Pierre Boulez rose to become the pre-eminent figure in modern French classical music – a pioneer of improvisation, experimentation and electronic music, a revered conductor and a fierce critic of what he saw as the passivity and restrictive confines of classical music.

As an award-winning conductor, Boulez was known for his performances of composers including Bartók, Bruckner, Mahler, Stravinsky and Varèse. His 26 Grammys are testament to a brilliant rhythmical technique – delivered using only his hands, and no baton. His precision was legendary; Boulez could reportedly hear a moment of faulty intonation in even the most challenging, densest compositional pieces. As leader of some of the world’s most celebrated orchestras – including the New York Philharmonic and the BBC Symphony Orchestra – he brought new prominence to modern classical music.

Following discussions with French premier Georges Pompidou, Boulez created and developed the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM) in the ’70s, a high-concept conservatoire dedicated entirely to the exploration and development of modern music. Like key figures in his circle such as Stockhausen, Berio and John Cage, Boulez championed philosophical techniques in composition including “serialism”, “pitch multiplication” and “controlled chance”. A powerful polemicist, his fiery intelligence and controversial opinions were captured brilliantly in the 1971 book *Boulez On Music Today*.

Boulez was a specialist on the ondes Martenot – one of the earliest electronic instruments – and his most famous compositional works such as *Le Marteau Sans Maître* demonstrated his synthesis of different cultures and influences, including jazz, African and Japanese music, and is claimed as a turning point in modern classical. Other works including *Polyphonie X*, *Structures* and *Pli Selon Pli* – based on the work of 19th-century French symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé – proved more controversial.



Pierre Boulez in 2005: “his precision was legendary”

Boulez is known to rock audiences for his work with Frank Zappa on 1984’s challenging *The Perfect Stranger*. As Boulez said of Zappa in 2010: “Zappa stood out from the ranks because he shunned commercial logic. Provocative, leaning much to the left, he loathed the market into which music had compromised itself.” It’s an epitaph that could equally apply to Boulez himself.

the mid-’60s and a finishing school for some of California’s biggest talents, including a teenaged Ry Cooder, Taj Mahal and future Spirit drummer Ed Cassidy. Marker’s friendship with Beefheart led to early production work on *Safe As Milk* and – though he rejected an offer to join the Magic Band permanently – *Trout Mask Replica*. His bass playing can be heard on “Moonlight On Vermont” and “Veteran’s Day Poppy”.

STEVIE WRIGHT

Australian rock singer

(1947-2015)

The Easybeats were the most prominent Australian rock band of the 1960s, and frontman Stephen “Stevie” Wright was widely considered the country’s first internationally known pop star. Wright co-wrote many of the band’s early Australian hits, but it was the

Vanda/Young composition “Friday On My Mind” – fired by Wright’s energetic backflips and mod dancing – that broke the band internationally, making the UK Top 10 and US Top 20 in 1966 and 1967 respectively. The Easybeats split in ’69, but Wright continued to write and record – his 1974 solo album *Hard Road* (featuring AC/DC’s Malcolm Young) is considered a landmark Australian release.

ROBERT STIGWOOD

Entertainment industry magnate

(1934-2016)

Born in Australia, Stigwood moved to the UK in the 1950s, and set up his own theatrical agency. Thanks to Joe Meek, his client John Leyton scored an unexpected 1961 No 1 (“Johnny Remember Me”) and the music business beckoned. A skilled operator, Stigwood struck deals with EMI, Polydor and Brian Epstein’s NEMS, before going on to manage Cream and finance big-budget musical hits including *Hair* and *Oh! Calcutta!*.

Success with the BeeGees – signed to his own RSO label – allowed Stigwood to branch out further, delivering movie blockbusters (*Saturday Night Fever*, *Grease*) and infamous flops (*Staying Alive*, the *Sgt Pepper* musical) in almost equal measure.

WILLIAM GUEST

Soul singer, Gladys Knight & The Pips

(1941-2015)

A first cousin of Gladys Knight, William Guest’s rich vocals feature on all the Grammy-winning group’s key releases, from their time at Motown in the 1960s to their chart peak in the 1970s and beyond. Guest also worked with the Pips on the soundtrack to 1974 movie drama *Claudine* with producer Curtis Mayfield. Guest’s 2012 autobiography *Midnight Train From Georgia: A Pip’s Journey* chronicles life in one of music’s most famous backing groups. In tribute, Knight said: “From day one, we were two road warriors, succeeding against the odds of the show business.”

MARK BENTLEY



Robert Stigwood with the Bee Gees in 1977

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UNCUT'S TOP 200: BLUES DON'T RUN THE GAME

The 200 Greatest Albums Of All Time [*Uncut*, February 2016] makes for interesting reading. However, I cannot help but feel there is a terrible sense of injustice in the absence of so many great blues artists. Perhaps the 'no compilations' rule is to blame, but I hope it is not, because we're somehow losing touch with just how great this music remains. To effectively present the best music of all time without even mention of the blues, or anything from the Chess or Sun canons, seems incongruous. These labels and artists reshaped music: where are Howlin' Wolf, Willie Dixon, Muddy Waters, Little Walter, BB King, Chuck Berry, Buddy Guy, Etta James, Koko Taylor, Ray Charles, Son House, Robert Johnson? How much of this list would exist without their influence? The revolution in music took place a lot earlier than the 1960s, so much so that the concept of albums was still to be fully formed, something that should be acknowledged. I too dislike compilations, but they remain one of the few ways of accessing this culturally significant, vital music.

Ben Pinnington, Merseyside

...I know your lists are designed to provoke a response, and I told myself to stay calm before I read it, but when I saw *In Utero* in the list with no room for *Nevermind*, I knew we were in the familiar hipster terrain that appears whenever music journals get together to stroke their beards. Three Byrds albums, but no room for *LA Woman*? What rock snobs you are! Free? Lizzy? Motörhead? Purple? Genesis? Creedence? Too popular for you? Plus, a lot of other genres got very short shrift: psychedelia, folk, prog, blues, metal, '70s hard rock and new wave, grunge, Britpop, glam, to name a few.

My first response was to wade in with my own catalogue of cool – whither Tim Buckley's *Starsailor*, Terry Reid's *River*, Skip Spence's *Oar*? They'll still be talked about after Joanna Newsom has long been forgotten.

Nigel Hodgkins, via email

...An interesting list (more than half of which feature in my collection), but surely your 200 Greatest Albums Of All Time chose to be – with some exceptions: Dr John, Captain Beefheart and The Incredible String Band – a rather safe selection? *Uncut*'s 200 is also notable for a significant genre being neglected. I'm talking about prog. Can you really overlook such important albums as *Hero And Heroine* from The Strawbs, Genesis' *Foxtrot*, King Crimson's *Lizard*, Van Der Graaf Generator's *The Least We Can Do Is Wave To Each Other*, *The Yes Album*, Procol Harum's *A Salty Dog* or Jethro Tull's *Thick As A Brick*? Lists, by their very nature, are provocative and I'm sure my reaction is partly what the *Uncut* 200 was meant to achieve. So well done!

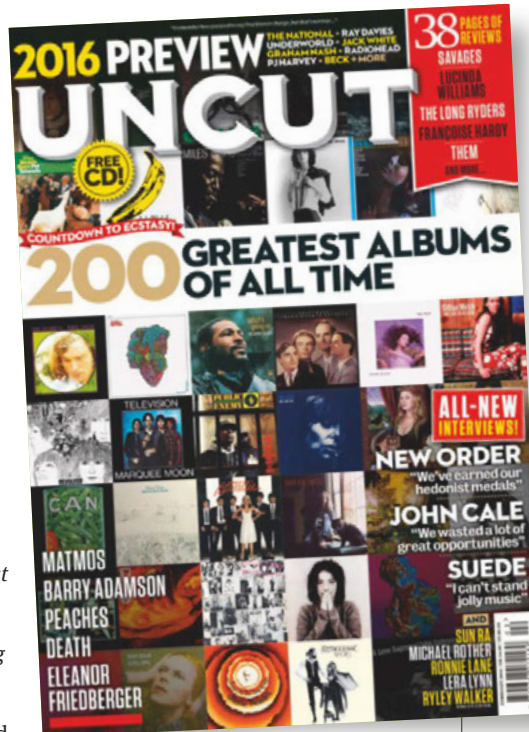
John Millar, Irvine, Ayrshire

MORE TOP 200 THOUGHTS... TRANSFORMER A "HEAP OF POO"?

I absolutely loved the re-emergence of the Best LPs Ever list but, obviously, have my issues (which is presumably the point of publishing it). The first is that it really should be called the 200 best rock-oriented LPs ever. There is a small intrusion of jazz LPs here which, while they may have had an influence on rock, were not influenced by it in any way. And I doubt a serious jazzier would have chosen those four or five to represent the whole genre (most of them think *Kind Of Blue* is trite)! Having said that, *Bitches Brew* definitely deserves to be there: a monster, a genuine fusion and hugely influential on rock and jazz.

And could we really only manage one reggae LP? *Heart Of The Congos*? Good album, but not exactly genre-shattering. If we are going for "rock-oriented", then I find it amazing that the first Island Wailers album (*Catch A Fire*), or *Live!*, couldn't find a place.

But then that is democracy, I suppose, and how the votes were



weighted. I wonder what the list would look like if you gave 50 to the first choice, 40 to the second, 30 to the third and then one point each to all of those outside the top 10? Go on, do it!

Personally, I think the only records that should be considered are those that are, firstly, over 10 years old (as anything younger we don't know the importance of yet); should have had either a significant cultural or musical impact at the time or been significantly influential going forward; and still be listenable and enjoyable today. If that filter was applied, quite a lot of these would pass out and others, more worthy, would pass in.

Democracy and fashion has robbed us, however, of *Led Zeppelin II* (by far their best and most influential album), *In The Court of The Crimson King* (an absolute game-changer in 1969 and still awesome today), *Live/Dead* (the best acid album ever), *Hot Rats*, *Deep Purple In Rock* (just as much a metal template and far more listenable than *Paranoid*), *Blues Breakers* (invented blues rock) and, more recently, *Songs For The Deaf* and *Californication*, two towering examples of the incredible reinvigoration of rock at the beginning of this century.

But it has given us: four Joni

Mitchell LPs, three from The Cure, The Human League, Donald Fagen, Oasis (why not *Slade Alive!* and have done with it?), The Associates, two from that most neanderthal and pointless of bands, The Fall, The Slits, and, like some sort of Japanese knotweed infestation, U2. And the wrong LPs from Elvis Costello (*This Year's Model*, surely?), The Only Ones (*Even Serpents Shine* is their best) and Robert Wyatt's dismal *Rock Bottom* (rather than Soft Machine's *Third*).

Interestingly, only one of your panel chose *Pet Sounds* as No 1. But four chose *Forever Changes*. I just played both. *Forever Changes* is a sophisticated, spiteful, romantic, beautifully

structured and fully integrated suite of genuinely weird and brilliant songs. It was and remains timeless. *Pet Sounds* is what we know it is; a patchy, thrown-together collection of genuinely great stuff and filler. Very much a period piece. I defy you once you have put on *Forever Changes* to take it off and to actually listen to *Pet Sounds* through without skipping tracks.

Obviously those on the panel who chose as their best LPs ever Gang Of Four, The Streets, Chic, Lou Reed's *Transformer* (I am a Velvets fanatic and I have never owned a copy of this heap of poo), The Go-Betweens, Rodriguez's *Cold Fact* (don't get me wrong I have loved this album for 20 years... but the best ever? Give me a break!) need to have all their votes cancelled as, somewhere along the line, they have utterly lost their perspective compasses!

Jon Grocock, Glastonbury

AND MORE: "TRULY A CROCK OF SHIT..."

So, 2016 is set to be the crash-and-burn year where I find that everything I believed rock'n'roll to be requires a radical reappraisal. John Lennon's *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* album, far from being (as I thought) the greatest album of all time, barely scrapes into *Uncut*'s



Top 200 listing. I blame myself for failing to consider that naturally it should languish way behind The Slits' *Cut*, Spiritualized's 1997 opus and LCD Soundsystem. Equally, I should have taken for granted the non-appearance of *Aladdin Sane*, *All Things Must Pass*, *The Holy Bible* or any of the first three Led Zeppelin releases when faced with such venerable competition as the Beastie Boys and GZA. Perhaps I should assuage the bile your listing has created by recognising that Steely Dan's *Can't Buy A Thrill*, probably the strongest debut album ever, was in touching distance of the Top 100, and that Laura Nyro, Todd Rundgren and Gene Clark all managed to get through the entry gates. Seriously, didn't someone at the *Uncut* office stand back prior to publication and say, "Comrades, on reflection, this listing truly is a crock of shit"?

Paul Payne, Powys

THE SAN JOSE COUNCIL CHAMBER ACID TEST

I really enjoyed Rob Hughes' recounting of the early Acid Tests [*Uncut*, December] that were perpetrated in Northern California over the winter of 1965-'66. But I was profoundly disappointed that Mr Hughes gave zero mention to the most historic test of all – the one on December 4, 1965, in downtown San Jose. It was that night when, at a large house near the local university, the Grateful Dead played their first-ever gig under that name, as Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters staged their usual mayhem. Meanwhile, The Rolling Stones were playing a concert the same evening at the nearby San Jose Civic Auditorium, and the Pranksters recruited participants to the test by passing out leaflets on the auditorium steps to exiting fans.

In Bill Wyman's autobiography, he writes that Keith Richards and Brian Jones attended the event and spent the evening tripping out in the crawl space beneath the house (Richards claims to remember none of this, which I suppose should shock no-one). The historic house still exists but was moved to another location because San Jose chose to build its new City Hall on top of the original Acid Test site. So, in a fantastic rock'n'roll fact, the San Jose city council chamber now pretty much sits directly above the spot where the Grateful Dead first performed as the Grateful Dead. Some of us locals are working to get a plaque erected to mark this extraordinary location. I hope *Uncut* readers will wish us luck.

Mark Purdy, San Jose, California



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by David Bowie. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: *Uncut* March 2016 Xword Comp, 8th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU. The first correct entry picked at random will win a prize. Closing date: **Monday, February 22, 2016**. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Could a clue often be rewritten for a Neil Young live album? (8-4)
- 7 Big Brovaz hit single that was just a bit of a joke (2)
- 10 "And I know that if she had me back again, I would never make her sad, I've got a _____", 1965 (5-4-2-4)
- 11+15D Everyone is ignorant about this one from Queens Of The Stone Age (2-3-5)
- 12 Frank Sinatra had them in 1959, Pink Floyd in 1994 (4-5)
- 14+32A Small Faces' number in its older form (3-7)
- 16 Direction Reaction Creation was the title of their 1997 five-disc boxset anthology (3)
- 18 (See 6 down)
- 21 (See 26 down)
- 22 The army on manoeuvres with Gene Vincent (2-5)
- 23 "_____ For The Deaf album includes the one from 11 across (5)
- 25 How to address Bono (3)
- 27 American band so bad he turned over (7)
- 29 "If the _____ comes, they run and hide their heads, they might as well be dead", Beatles (4)
- 30 Gaye Bykers On _____, late '80s grebo rockers headed by Monkees single (4)
- 31 King Crimson album that was partly predictable (3)
- 32 (See 14 across)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Fleetwood Mac not really facing up to things (6-3-4)
- 2 "Hitch a ride to the end of the highway, where the neon turn to wood", 1970 (2-6-3-4)
- 3 Someone off his head in The Music and Chumbawamba (6)
- 4 "Pretty woman, I don't believe you, you're not the _____", Roy Orbison (5)
- 5 Frank Zappa's album cover designer gets musical at the end (3)
- 6+18A The Byrds giving a measured performance in a rather hypothetical way (5-9)
- 8 Deadens the band with No Wow (5)
- 9 Dido opted to include a Dutch dance act with eponymous No 1 single (4)
- 13 "Welly you're built like a car, you've got a hub cap diamond star halo", 1971 (3-2-2)
- 15 (See 11 across)
- 16 (See 19 down)
- 17 Get down on the floor with someone from Suede (3)
- 19+16D "_____, we got a thing going on, we both know that it's wrong", 1973 (2-3-3-5)
- 20 (See 28 down)
- 24 Jeff Buckley not playing in Bad Manners style (5)
- 26+21A It didn't matter how prepared we were in 1996, both The Lightning Seeds and the Fugees were coming for us (5-2-3)
- 28+20D Until Len has somehow worked out where an Orange Juice compilation album can be put (2-1-8)

ANSWERS: TAKE 224

ACROSS

1+26 A Still Got That Hunger, 9 Thrak, 10 Membranes, 13 Weirdo, 16 Eye, 17 Others, 18 Este, 21 Lilac Wine, 23+34 A Candi Staton, 24 Lay Down,

29 Angus, 32 LA, 33+12 A In Search Of Space
DOWN
2 Thrasher, 3+11 D Like A Rolling Stone, 4 Gimme Shelter, 5 Time, 6 Horses, 7 Ten, 8 Strokes, 15+14 D Cracklin' Rosie, 19+28 D Did

You Ever, 20 Bachman, 22 Can, 25 Wilco, 27 Nice, 29 Ash, 30 Gas, 31 Sea

HIDDEN ANSWER
"Peacock Suit"

XWORD COMPILED BY:
Trevor Hungerford

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MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Lucinda Williams

Inside the surprising record collection of a great singer-songwriter. Don't mention Americana!



My starting point

Bob Dylan Highway 61 Revisited 1965

This was the first Bob Dylan album I heard and, even though I was only 12, it really made an impression on me. It was the first album I heard that I understood: he was taking traditional folk music and putting it together with the literary world, and I understood both those worlds, because of my dad [Miller Williams] being a poet. I'd just started taking guitar lessons, too, learning folk music, so this was a really significant album.



An otherworldly album

The Doors The Doors 1967

I still listen to this album, and to me it's still really relevant. There's just something about what Jim Morrison was saying, the imagery and just the whole vibe and moodiness of it.

They didn't have a bassist – it was just guitar, keyboard and drums, which was really unusual to begin with – so that gave the album this whole other sound. And then Jim's voice... he was so sexy-looking, just the whole thing.



A British blues peak

Cream Disraeli Gears 1967

When I was a teenager there was all this music coming out all at once which felt so new. A lot of the British bands back then were really influential, and most of those were blues-based. Cream, The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, even Bert Jansch – I love his album [1969's] *Birthday Blues* – and John Martyn... I loved a lot of the British music at that time. Bands like Cream were really influential [in America], and they did such a great job.



My introduction to white American blues

Various Artists The Blues Project 1964

This was a compilation of white blues artists, mostly from the Midwest, people like Geoff Muldaur, Dave Van Ronk and Mark Spoelstra. It came out in 1964, but I didn't discover it until 1967. I read [in a previous *My Life In Music*] Gary Rossington on how their introductions to the blues were through the English guys, which is, y'know, a little hard to admit. But that's what was happening! I heard bands like Cream, then got into these guys.



A huge influence

Robert Johnson King Of The Delta Blues Singers, Vol II 1970

In the early '70s, everyone was listening to this. It was real blues, and different to anything I'd heard. He wrote like no other blues artist, stuff like "You can squeeze my lemon 'til the juice runs down my leg...", which ended up in Led Zeppelin ["The Lemon Song"]. His stuff informed my writing a lot. I have a line in my song, "2 Kool 2 Be 4-Gotten": "Mr Johnson sings in a corner by the bar/Sold his soul to the devil so he could play guitar."



A vocal and style inspiration

Bobbie Gentry Ode To Billie Joe 1967

All the female singer-songwriters I knew, like Joan Baez and Judy Collins, had these pretty, high voices, and I never felt like I'd be able to sing like that. But when I heard this album I went, "Wow!" 'Cos Bobbie Gentry's voice is so low and smoky. And there she was in those little tight jeans and T-shirt with her black eyeliner and a little bitty guitar... That didn't escape me, and I'm sure no-one else, 'cos she was just gorgeous.



An album I play all the time

Thievery Corporation The Cosmic Game 2005

They dabble a bit in Brazilian and world music, and blend it with all these beats. It's just very fresh, and I love the way it feels and sounds. And they can pull it off live – some people might listen to the album and think, "Oh, this is all overdubbed", but when they play live they have these different artists all doing stuff. I saw them play in Austin and they had Jamaican guest artists sitting in. They're cool, sweet guys, too.



A recent favourite

Atmosphere Southsiders 2014

A lot of people are surprised when I mention this one. The rapper, Slug, is just an amazing writer. He's very socially conscious – there's this one song he wrote about one of his close friends who died, "Flicker", and it's like... poetry. There needs to be another name for this kind of music besides 'hip-hop' – it's like saying 'Americana'. People don't know what to label me, I still get referred to as 'Americana', or 'country', and, you know, whatever.

Lucinda Williams' *The Ghost Of Highway 20* is out now on Highway 20/Thirty Tigers

IN NEXT MONTH'S UNCUT:

"He'd go from blues growl to incredible soprano... he could do so much, it was almost a curse"

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